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THE HARDER THEY COME

The launch of TiVo, the eagerly-awaited alternative to the VCR, has caused a major furore among AV retailers. Independent electrical retailers gagging for a slice of the hard-disk action are left feeling more depressed than an England football supporter, as limited stocks mean that TiVo distribution has been restricted to Currys and Dixons until January 2001.

"The days of a simple format war like Betamax vs VHS are long gone"

Check out our exclusive in-depth review of TiVo on p22 and you'll see that the independent retailers' chagrin may be misplaced. This brilliant and revolutionary box of tricks, commonly known as a Personal Video Recorder (PVR) ought to be to video recording what DVD has been to home cinema. I say 'ought' rather than 'will' or 'should' because there are one or two spanners either in or about to be thrust into the PVR works.

For starters, at £399 plus £10 per month subscription (or a one-off payment of £199) TiVo is too expensive to achieve mass-market penetration. Sure, TiVo's functionality is mind-blowing, but even techno-loving *What Video & TV* regulars will baulk at parting with nearly £600 for the privilege of owning a machine that automatically records your favourite shows.

Another problem is that although TiVo receives EPG updates overnight, it doesn't have any way of adjusting for late or overrunning programmes, an annoying problem which even the humble VCR has partially cracked via VideoPlus/PDC.

Even if TiVo resolves these problems it will eventually face some very stiff competition. Video-on-demand services are starting to appear, recordable DVD is around the corner and early next year we will see Sky digiboxes with built-in PVRs (see *News*, p7).

The days of a simple format war like Betamax vs VHS are long gone. Now there are all kinds of overlapping products which confuse the consumer. We're currently investigating all of the various options and will carry a detailed review in a future issue.

In the meantime, my guess is that TiVo won't exploit this superb opportunity to effect a revolution in video recording, and independent retailers will soon find solace in the variety of alternatives heading their way.

Adrian Justins
Editor

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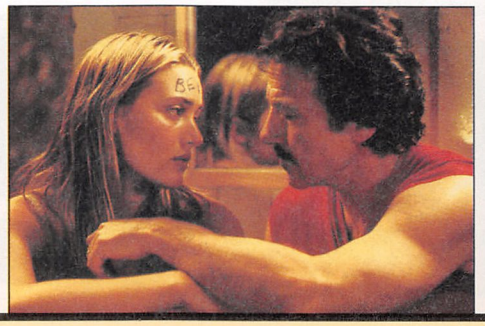

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DECEMBER 2000

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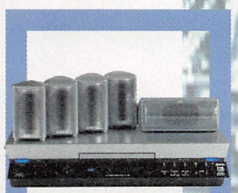

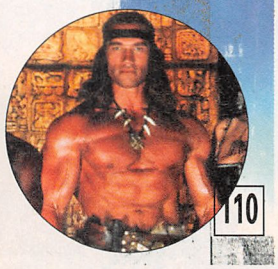

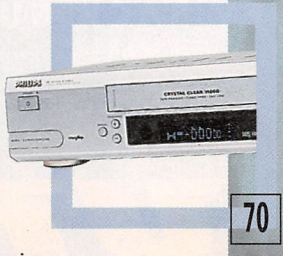

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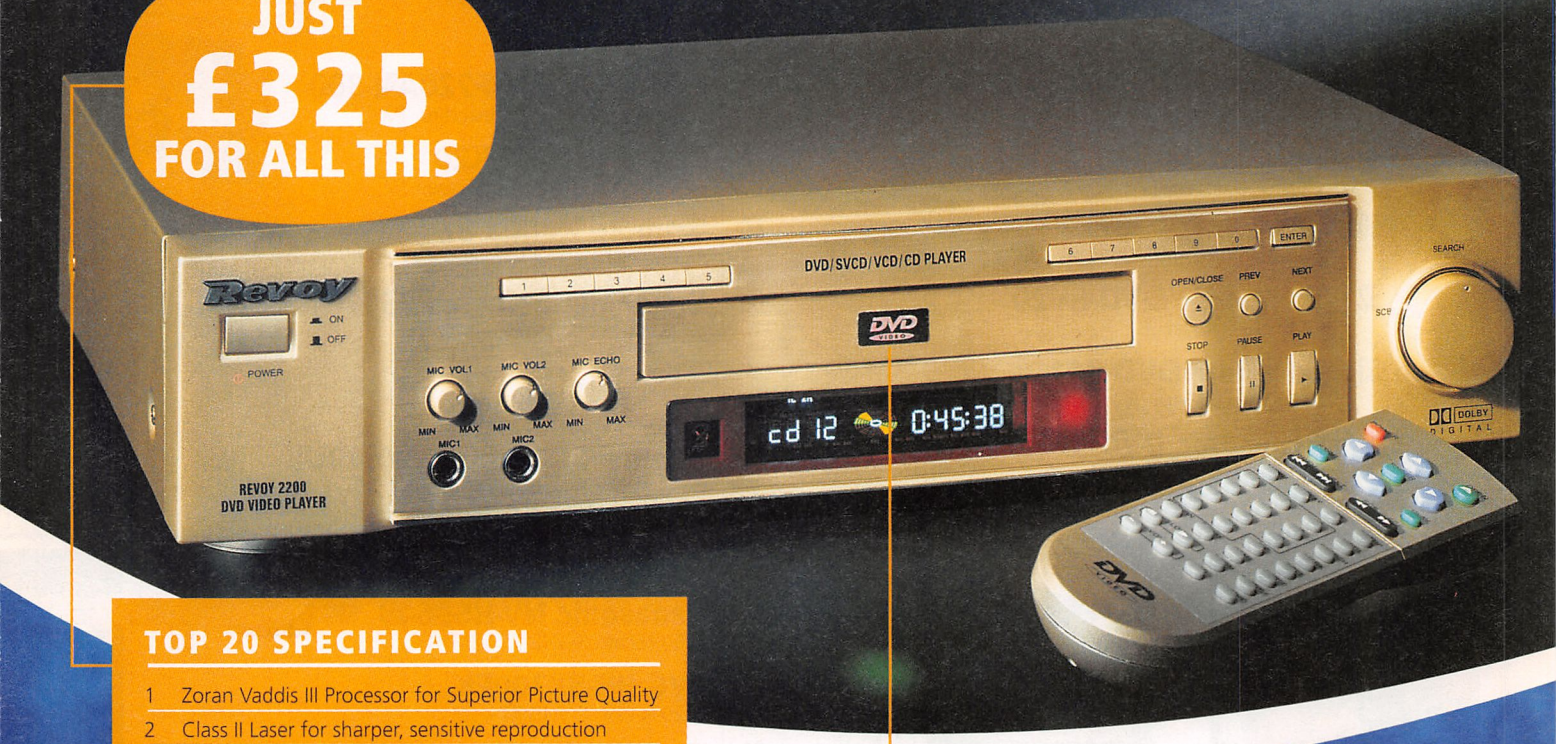

TOP 20 SPECIFICATION

1. Zoran Vaddis III Processor for Superior Picture Quality
2. Class II Laser for sharper, sensitive reproduction
3. DVD, SVCD, VCD, CD-R, CD-RW, CD-HDCD
4. 1-6 Region Free
5. AC-3 Built-in Dolby Digital
6. DTS Digital Theatre Sound 5.1
7. 3D Digital Sound Effects
8. MP3 plays download music from Internet. On-screen menu
9. SCART: RGB-CVBS
10. PAL/NTSC Automatic, 16:9 and 4:3ps
11. OSD - On screen display
12. S - Video
13. Composite Video
14. PCM 8 Channel
15. 32 Multi-subtitle & 8 Multi-language
16. Multi-angle viewing from different cameras
17. Re-play 1/2,1/4, 1/8, 1/16, slow and 'Select time'
18. Twin microphone Karaoke input with sound effects
19. Games function (tetris), remote control joystick
20. Choice of finish: Black, Champagne or Silver

Revoy 2200

This top of the range DVD player is new to the UK from Europe at the incredibly competitive price of £325 (+£10 delivery). Acknowledged by Eupropean experts to offer the highest specification regardless of cost, the Revoy 2200 is Region Free and has at its heart the Zoran Vaddis III processor and Class II Laser for more sensitive and sharper reproduction. A full 5.1 surround sound with built-in Dolby Digital AC-3 decoder, the Revoy 2200 brings you complete Digital Theatre Sound without the need to buy a new TV. Check out these 20 good reasons to choose Revoy 2200 for your movie viewing. The competition just does not stack up at this price!

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news

THE LATEST IN VIDEO, DVDs, TVs, HOME CINEMA AND CAMCORDERS

PACE DEMOS HARD-DISK STBs

Pace has demonstrated the next generation of digital satellite set-top boxes, which will contain a built-in hard disk for timeshift recording without tape. The boxes will also carry a second digital tuner for recording from one digital channel while watching or simultaneously recording another. Two recordings can even be made while an existing recording is played back. In addition, it will offer features similar to the TiVo box (see p22-26) such as live TV pausing and trick play.

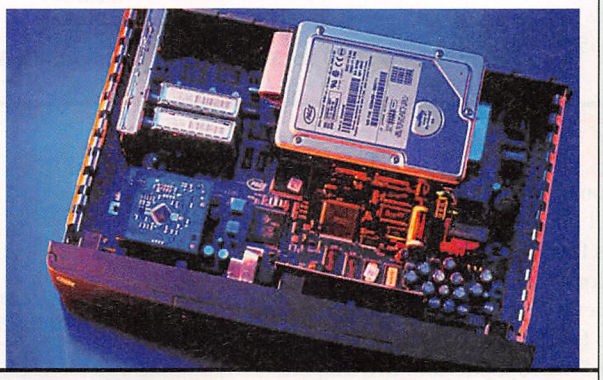
Sky is poised to be the first UK broadcaster to use the Pace system, with plans for the first model to be launched in early 2001. The digital receiver element of the system will probably be subsidised like standalone boxes, but no pricing has been announced for the rest of the system. Additional subscription fees, again like TiVo, are also possible.

Unlike TiVo, the integrated systems will record digital-to-digital onto the hard disk. It will, however, also give the broadcasters more control over what goes onto the disk. For example, specially targeted adverts may be downloaded overnight and inserted into programmes being played back.

Although trick play features should allow these to be skipped, the broadcaster could temporarily disable the function. This would risk a viewer backlash, but it is an example of what's possible.

Pace has also demonstrated a prototype of its home gateway network system. The first version will use DECT digital cordless phone technology to distribute data from digital cable boxes to other items around the home, such as handheld computers. It will also enable the cable box to act as a hub for telephony and fast internet links, without wires, to other terminals in or around the home. Video distribution may come later.

For details see www.pace.com.



SIM2 DEBUTS PROJECTOR

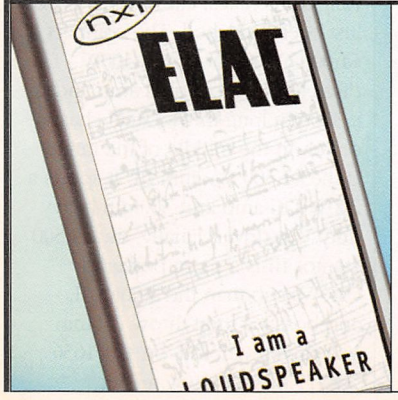
Italian projector specialist SIM2 has unveiled the Seleco Grand Cinema HT200 LCD projector. The unit, which is available now for £7,000 from UK distributor OWL Video Systems, features Texas Instruments' Digital Mirror Device (DMD) and delivers 800 ANSI lumens of brightness. It sports SVGA resolution (800 x 600 pixels) with a screen size up to 250in at a throw of 6.5m.

Connectivity includes PAL, Secam, NTSC 3.58/4.43MHz, composite, S-video, RGB, component video, RS232 and high-definition TV. The 120W bulb has a claimed life of 4,000hr and the unit is sealed from dust.

SIM2 claims that the projector almost matches traditional CRT projectors' ability to produce high-contrast, edge-to-edge definition and colour accuracy.

Available in four colours (red, black, silver and pearl-grey), the HT200 should appeal to home cinema enthusiasts by virtue of its contemporary styling, compact size and lightness (5kg). It is designed for table top, bookshelf or ceiling mounting and is easily transportable.

Watch out for a full review of the HT200 in next month's *What Video & TV*. In the meantime, for more information call OWL on ☎ 01825 766123 or see www.owl-video.co.uk.



ELAC FLATTENS SPEAKERS

Germany-based Elac has unveiled flat-panel speakers which are just 6cm deep. Using NXT technology and Elac's own panel design, the first model will be the 60 x 40cm Imago Panel (price to be announced). Frequency response is 150Hz-20kHz, and panels will be sold with a variety of frame finishes (including aluminium, real wood, anthracite and night-blue lacquer), and a package including an optional matching sub. Both larger and smaller panels are planned for different applications.

For more details call Elac c/o Sennheiser on ☎ 0800 652 5002.

NEWS IN BRIEF

THOMSON DVD COMBI HACK FOUND

A hack has emerged for Thomson's range of TV-DVD combis (such as the 24WT25ES reviewed in our September issue). To make these machines multiregional, simply press Eject, Forward Search and OK on the TV's front panel simultaneously with a disc inside the deck.

YELO PLAYER GOES OFF-COLOUR

The Yelo 800DVD player, a sample of which was enthusiastically reviewed in the last issue has, sadly, been withdrawn over quality control issues affecting the mass-production models. Customers are being offered an alternative machine or a refund. Contact Yelo on ☎ 020 8366 0000.

HITACHI DRIVES PC DVD-ROM MARKET

Hitachi has launched a sixth-generation DVD-ROM drive for PCs, the GD-7500, which reads any currently available 120mm optical disc including CDs, write-once DVD-R and, rewriteable DVD media up to 4.7Gb. Data can be transferred at up to 16.6Mbit/sec (12x max) for DVD-ROM and 6Mbit/sec (40x max) for CD-ROM, and enhanced data access times for all types of media.

Among its various possible applications, the GD-7500 will allow DVDs to be watched on PCs and handle files which have been created on DVD-compliant camcorders and digital cameras. It will be integrated into forthcoming computer systems or offered as an upgrade through retailers (prices vary). For more information visit www.hitachi-eu-img.com.

DATAVIDEO OFFERS S-VCD RECORDER

Holdan is selling a DVD player with Video CD recording facilities. The £900 Datavideo VDR-1000 records in VCD (MPEG1) or S-VCD (MPEG2) formats. The former holds up to 73min and the latter 37min on inexpensive CD-R or RW blank discs. Up to 98 tracks can be marked on one disc.

The NTSC and PAL machine also supports DVD-Photo playback as well as standard CD playback. Sockets include composite, S-video and stereo audio inputs/outputs, two mic inputs and an optional IEEE1394 DV input (for an extra £300).

A full review of the VDR-1000 is slated for our next issue. For details contact Holdan on ☎ 0845 130 4445 or visit www.datavideo-tek.com.

Copy from DVD to S-VCD with Datavideo's VDR-1000

QED STARTS SQART

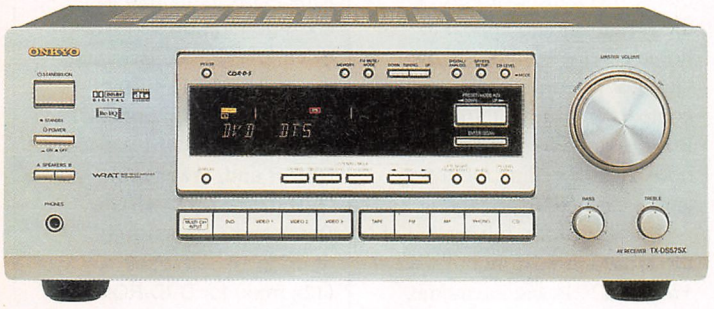
Interconnects specialist QED has announced a high-quality Scart cable, named the Sqart, intended to deliver high-end cable quality in the traditional form of a 21-pin connector. Starting at £50 for a 1m Scart-to-Scart link, the Sqart features a specially designed plug for a secure and easy fit, 100 per cent screened audio cables to keep signals pure, and dual-screened silver-plated oxygen-free copper video cables to reduce picture noise.

For more information call QED on ☎ 01276 452211 or visit www.qed.co.uk.

ONKYO UPGRADES AV RECEIVER

Onkyo has upgraded its popular home cinema receiver, the £450 TX-DS575. Carrying the same model number, the revised Dolby Digital 5.1/DTS receiver now sports four digital inputs, dual banana-plug compatible terminals for all channels, auto digital/analogue signal detection, volume level memory and a backlit learning remote control with macro functions.

The new-look DS575 retains four S-video inputs and two outputs, and is available in black or silver. For more details contact Onkyo c/o Jamo on ☎ 01788 556777, or visit www.onkyo.net.



DVD-AUDIO GOES MICRO

Technics has unveiled the world's first mini-system with built-in DVD-Audio/Video capabilities. The £900 SC-HDA710 has separate internal amps for each speaker. The system comes ready for stereo operation but an additional £300 SC-HDX3 package provides a three-channel amp plus centre/rear speakers.

The SC-HDA710 also matches the SJ-HDA710 MiniDisc player/recorder. Check our review on p86. For more information ☎ 08705 357357 or check out www.panasonic.co.uk.

HITACHI JOINS DIGITAL CLUB

Hitachi has made its first foray into the digital camcorder world with the launch of a Digital8 model, the £600 VM-D865LE. Digital8 is backwards-compatible with existing Hi8 and 8mm tapes, which means users can play old analogue recordings on a digital camcorder.

The cam, which is already on sale, sports a 22x optical lens with a 500x digital magnification, which Hitachi claims produces a clear and undistorted image even at high magnification. Other features include a built-in TBC (timebase corrector), which improves still frame stability and reduces picture noise by 50 per cent, a Digital Effects mode, 2.5in colour LCD foldout monitor and PCM digital stereo audio.

Among the VM-D865LE's roster of digital effects are 16:9 (pseudo widescreen); Mosaic (dissolves a scene into a mass of pixels); Negative and Art, which gives the footage an oil painting effect.

For further information contact Hitachi on ☎ 01628 643000 or check out www.hitachi-consumer-eu.com.

REL REELS OUT SUB TRIO

REL's three latest subwoofers have just been launched. The compact £1,000 Q400E houses a 400W discrete direct-coupled amp and a 300mm long-throw, steel-chassis driver. In the middle of the range is the £1,500 Stadium III. It sports a 200W DC-amp and 300mm heavy duty Volt driver. Finally, the £2,500 Stentor III is a more powerful (300W) sub than the Stentor II, and boasts a long-throw 250mm Volt driver. Call REL on ☎ 01656 768777 or visit www.rel.net.

KEF CREATES COMPACT SPEAKERS

KEF has expanded its Q2 mid-priced home cinema speaker range with the Q85s compact two-way closed box surround or rear-effects speaker (£180 per pair), and the Q95c2 two-way sealed centre speaker (£200 each).

They are all also available within two special packages, the £850 QAV55 (including Q55.2 magnetically shielded front-stereo speakers with extended bass response, suitable for use without a subwoofer) and the £550 QAV15 (containing Q15.2 magnetically shielded front-stereo speakers).

For more information contact KEF on ☎ 01622 672261 or visit www.kef.com.

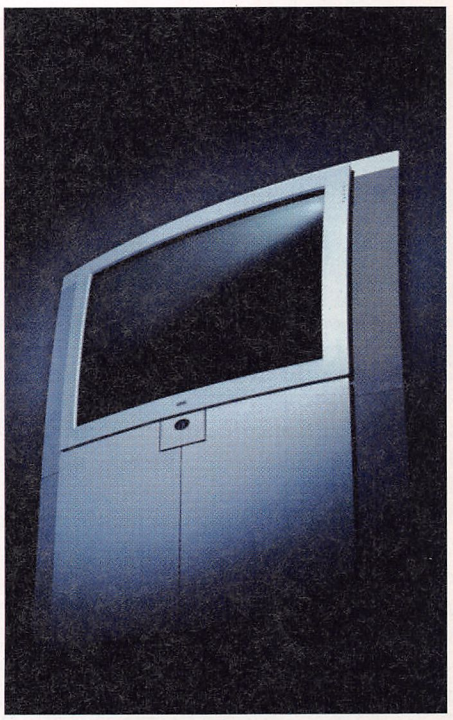
EUROPE GETS FIRST THX ULTRA DVD DECK

TAG McLaren Audio has unveiled Europe's first THX Ultra-approved PAL/NTSC DVD player, the DVD32R. The striking-looking, but pricey player will sell for around £4,000. The deck sports a top-loading disc transport mechanism to reduce jitter, purpose-built aluminium sub-chassis and automatic diecast drawer.

Further goodies include blue LEDs inside the drawer to aid disc changing in low light, test-pattern generator, reprogrammable flash-memory stored software and upgrade options for DVD-Audio and PAL/NTSC progressive scan.

It is also hardware upgradeable for digital video output, pending the resolution (if ever) of copyright protection issues and international standardisation. Existing outputs include two composite, S-video and component video outputs, two coaxial and one optical digital audio output. For more information ☎ 0800 783 8007.

TAG McLaren Audio's £4,000 THX Ultra DVD deck



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Further information on Loewe Home Cinema can be found on www.loewe.de or by calling Linn Products Ltd. on **Freephone 0500 888909.**

LOEWE.

SAMSUNG DEBUTS VCR RANGE

Samsung has 11 VCRs in its autumn 2000 range, 10 of which are new models. There are five two-head/one-Scart mono VCRs and four Nicam stereo/twin-Scart decks, plus the SV-5000W world-standards VCR reviewed in our November issue. The flagship Nicam model is the £170 SV-637B with a flip-down front panel, VideoPlus Deluxe, AV Link, front AVs and variable slo mo.

Samsung's entry-level Nicam model is the £130 SV-630B. Mono VCR pricing ranges from the £100 SV-230B to the £110 SV-232BG. All of these VCRs offer NTSC playback, time-remaining counter and Intelligent LP timer mode. For further details contact Samsung on ☎ 020 8391 0168 or point your browser at www.samsungelectronics.co.uk.

GRUNDIG BOLSTERS ITS STATUS

Heading the latest TV range from Grundig is its mighty Status, a £3,500 luxury 100Hz 32in widescreen TV with an integrated DVD player. Housed in an all-enclosing glass and metal stand, the Status was conceived by Alexander Neumeister (designer of the Japanese Bullet Train).

The Status also sports two tuners, picture-in-picture, double-window function, 512-page teletext memory and a motion sensor-activated drawer for the built-in DVD player. A matching wireless audio system will be launched later next year. The Status is available through selected stockists. For more ☎ 020 8324 9495.

SAMSUNG FINDS A FLATTER PLANO

The £950 Plano TV is, as the name suggests, Samsung's first totally flatscreen TV. The 32in WZ-32W8VD features Fastext, five picture modes, four widescreen aspect ratio modes, virtual Dolby Pro-Logic surround sound, five sound modes, 2 x 30W speaker output, two Scarts and side-mounted AV inputs (including S-video). For more information ☎ 020 8391 0168 or take a look at www.samsung electronics.co.uk.

www.panasonic.co.uk/tau

THINK [tau]

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PANASONIC REPLACES FLAGSHIP CAM

Panasonic is to replace its NV-DX100 flagship three-CCD DV camcorder with the £1,500 NV-MX300. Innovations appearing on the MX300 include a Leica Dicomar lens and SD Memory Card compatibility capable of storing 1.8-megapixel or UGXA resolution (1,586 x 1,152 pixels) stills.

Improvements have also been made to the optical image stabilisation system and signal processing. Key features include an *f*1.6 lens with 3.55-42.6mm focal length, progressive scan photoshot, PCM stereo sound with variable microphone input level control, zebra pattern overexposure warning, five-mode Program AE, a range of digital effects and full manual exposure control.

Two single-chip models, the £1,000 NV-MX5 and £1,100 NV-MX7 have also been launched into the 'e.cam' range. The MX5 and MX7 are SD memory card-compatible, capable of storing 100 megapixel stills in Fine mode on a 64Mb card.

SD cards have a higher capacity and faster transfer speed than other flash memory cards, but Panasonic says they will only be supplied as optional extras. The SD card can also be used to store MP3-type music files (using optional extra recording equipment) which can be played back via the camcorder. One 64Mb card can store an entire CD. The MX7 will have a DV in/out socket as well as analogue inputs, which allow users to transfer old Hi8 or 8mm footage onto DV.

For more information call Panasonic on ☎ 0990 357357 or see www.panasonic.co.uk.

NOKIA OPENS MEDIA TERMINAL

Nokia has disclosed more details about its Media Terminal, a convergence product combining digital TV receiver, hard disk and internet technologies. Available in various European digital TV territories from summer 2001, the Media Terminal will offer full internet access, email, digital TV reception, digital recording to hard disk, live TV pause, video on demand, plus compatibility with connected devices and additional interfaces using PCI modules.

For details see www.nokia.com.

COMPETITION WINNERS

C Waterfall of Oswestry won a Thomson Scenium TV in our August Unbeatable.co.uk competition. The five winners of Mico DVD-A980 decks are J Robson, PK Rowland, D Fineman, S Winter and DG Harding. Well done!

NOT TV

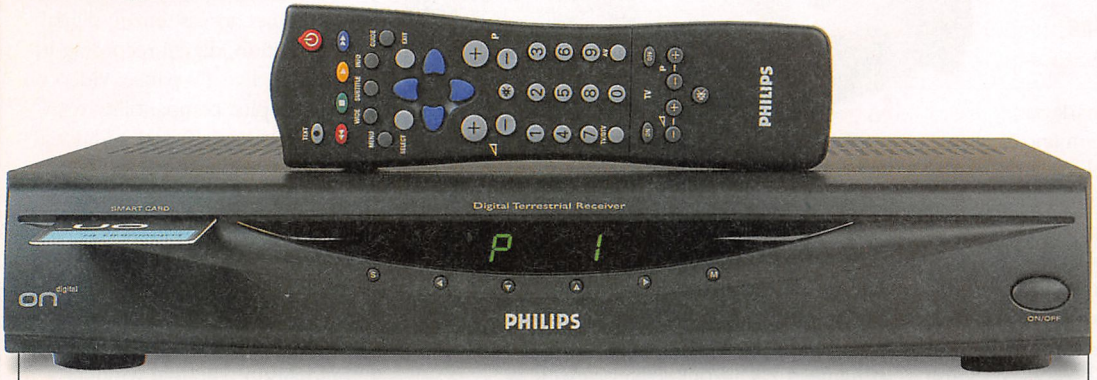
"vroom"

[SENSATIONAL] movie sound effects in your home. For more about [TAU] call 08705 357 357. There's TV and there's [TAU].

Panasonic

ON THE MONEY

Barry Fox has three things on his mind this month: the grinding progress of recordable DVD, dubious-sounding mobile phone technology and ONdigital's cracking current deal



For keeps, but only for subscribers

The best deal in town remains ONdigital's aerial offer. Anyone who pays to view ONdigital can ask for technical help to improve reception in an area where viewing is mapped as possible. The problem may be fixed with an attenuator, for people too near a transmitter, or re-sighting or replacing roof aerials that are not pulling in enough signal, and re-running cables that are old and leaky.

The service used to be free, when set-top boxes cost £200, but now that STBs are free, the charge is £40. This is for the first call only, with any further visits to fix a recurrent problem free.

Given the current cost of hiring an independent aerial fitter, this is such good value that it may be cheaper to subscribe to ONdigital for a year than 'go private'.

YOU HAVE TO PAY TO PLAY

Be warned though, if you think that getting a free ONdigital box with a year's subscription is a cheap way to get free-to-air reception. If you stop paying they will try to claw it back.

At the last count, in July, ONdigital had 774,000 subscribers, of which 15,000 were using IDTVs, and 33,000 were on free promotions, eg for demonstration. A total of 15,000 people have stopped paying since launch and 90 per cent of their STBs have been recovered. The broadcaster also warns that it will recover the plug-in Conditional Access Modules from IDTV users who churn.

ONdigital now claims over 50 channels, but some of them are only broadcasting some of the time. Hard-disk personal video recorders, like TiVo, will give ONdigital a big opportunity to expand apparent choice by transmitting specialist programmes at odd hours for timeshift viewing.

Although there are now 25 different IDTVs, from nine name brands, which either have embedded conditional access or plug-in CAMs available free to subscribers, the retail shops are doing a rotten job of selling them. Customers are confused by 'Digital' labels which often mean that the set has digital 100Hz scanning, not a digital decoder.

The same thing is happening with digital radio, where the label 'Digital' often means an LCD readout and synthesised tuning, not a decoder for DAB digital radio broadcasts.

If Chris Smith and his Department of Culture are serious about switching off analogue TV and later radio, their first priority must be to implement some kind of official standard labelling that helps customers get what they think they are paying for

RAM RAID

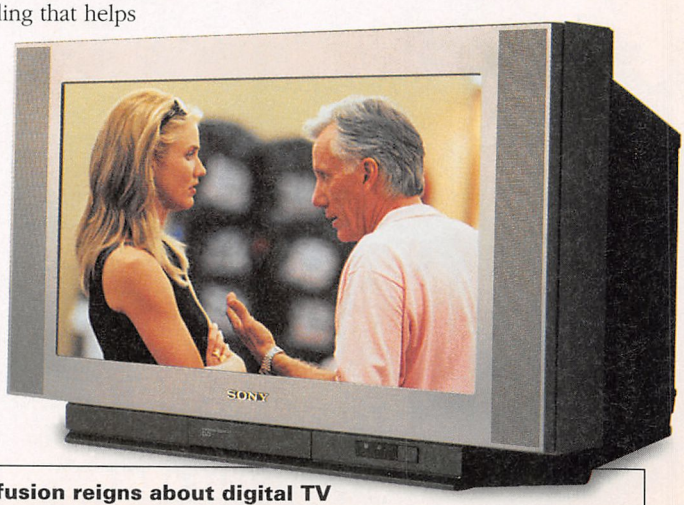
The brave new world of audio- and video-disc recording is not looking good. Panasonic's DVD-RAM deck is now on sale in the US. It sells for $4,000, while 4hr discs are $35. Because of copyright concerns there are no digital inputs and no digital outputs.

A digital TV must convert digits to analogue, the recorder then converts analogue back to digital for recording, and from digital to analogue for playback. There is no connection even for a digital camcorder, as Hollywood fears people will go to a cinema, tape from the screen and copy to disc.

Philips has now delayed the launch of DVD+RW for a full year. The DVDR1000 DVD+RW recorder will not be launched until the IFA show in Berlin in August 2001. And the deck will be priced at $3,000.

"The best deal in town remains ONdigital's aerial offer"

The official line is that it has taken longer than expected to develop the optical control chips. But we know that Philips has been talking with the RW Products Promotion Initiative (RWPPI), which Pioneer created



Confusion reigns about digital TV

DVD recording – without digital inputs

to try and make the Pioneer DVD-RW system compatible with DVD-RAM. Sony joined the RWPPI, but so far Philips has stayed out.

The DVDR1000 (unfinished aluminum for Europe, black for the US) will have four recording modes: a 1hr mode at 10Mbit/sec, intended primarily for DV-dubbing; 2hr recording at 5Mbit/sec and 3hr at 3.3Mbit/sec for off-air recording; and 4hr at 2.7Mbit/sec.

PHONE HONED

If you believe what you read in the press, 3G, the third-generation mobile phone due in a couple of years, will let people on the move 'watch near-TV quality video.' I am here quoting the BBC's own website.

Before that we get GPRS, from all the existing cellphone companies except Orange, who wants to go it alone with HSCSD, a rival and incompatible system. These are the facts of the matter. Draw your own conclusions on the likelihood of near-TV quality on the move, at affordable prices.

3G will use the Universal Mobile Telecommunications System which is now an international standard, on higher frequencies than current cellphone systems (1900-1980MHz, 2010-2025MHz and 2110-2170MHz). This allows for data rates of up to 2Mbit/sec, which is enough for video.

But there are three options: 144Mbit/sec for full-mobility applications over wide areas, 384Mbit/sec for limited-mobility applications and 2Mbit/sec for low-mobility applications in tiny cells. The high-speed option soaks up so much network capacity that it will be very expensive.

GPRS, General Packet Radio Service, gangs together several ordinary GSM cellphone channels (each giving 9.6Mbit/sec) to create a bit pool that serves several users at the same time, with bits allocated as and when they are needed. Data speeds can reach 100Mbit/sec or more. But the trial services are running at 27Mbit/sec.

Near-TV quality video... from a mobile phone?

Orange has for a year now been promising High Speed Circuit Switched Data. This uses less error correction than GSM to increase the basic GSM 9.6Mbit/sec data rate to 14.4Mbit/sec, with two channels ganged together to give 28.8Mbit/sec.

This is just enough to give halfway-decent videophone pictures. But only if two people who want to look while they talk are daft enough to buy into the same non-standard system ❐

The views expressed in this column are not necessarily held by the *What Video & TV* team

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video mail

SEASIDE SORROW

I have been struggling to get decent ONdigital reception for 12 months. I was told at the outset that I lived in a class A reception area, being only 10 miles from one of the two most powerful TV masts in the UK.

However, I soon discovered it was impossible to get a decent signal on all channels at the same time. If I could get BBC channels such as BBC1, 2 and News24, I lost all ITV channels. BBC channels seem to be the worst affected and Sky 1 the least.

The solution seemed to be more than one aerial. I now have four roof-mounted aerials pointing in slightly different directions, plus a Televes digital signal amplifier. Problem almost solved.

Unfortunately, the TV picture still breaks up when it rains or anything electrical is activated, such as the fridge. I contacted ONdigital and was told that as I live near the coast, the signals are affected by everything from high tides to ships' radar. It is, apparently, impossible to get unbroken reception with the current technology.

ONdigital suggested that I replace all my coaxial cable with higher-spec digital cable, and solder all the connections to improve my reception.

I was told that ONdigital is currently experimenting with new set-top boxes which work with a lower signal strength (presumably so the receivers don't pick up radar and the local cab firm). These STBs should be here next summer.

Digital technology is clearly still in the development and testing stage and not ready for the mass-market. It's no wonder that STBs are free, as ONdigital is just experimenting with current customers.

Jeff Clayton
via email

There's no doubt that terrestrial digital broadcasts aren't always perfect, in fact sometimes they are a joke. At last ONdigital has admitted this – see our feature on p18 for the latest developments.

FULLSCREEN FAN

Steve Old's entry to the widescreen debate in your September issue (*We Want Wide!, Video Mail*), shows how easy it is to get conned into buying a widescreen set. I'll put the anti-16:9 message another way.

Mr X bought a widescreen set with a screen measuring 16in wide by 9in high, a total of 144in sq when watching widescreen material. With 4:3 material he sees 12in wide by 9in high, with two black bars on either side, giving him just 108in sq.

Mr Y bought a 4:3 set with a screen measuring 16in wide by 12in high. When watching a widescreen picture he sees 16in times 9in coverage, with black bars at the top and bottom, which also gives him a total of 144in sq.

However, when watching a 4:3 picture he sees 16in times 12in, which gives him 192in sq. Compare that with Mr X's 4:3 picture of only 108in sq. Do I need to say more?

The day I see widescreen PC monitors will be the day I switch over from 4:3 to widescreen.

Mr H Li
via email

Forget the maths, the whole point is that watching a widescreen image is much more enjoyable than 4:3, especially movies, which can be seen in their native format.

PC monitors don't need to be widescreen because they are used for close-up work, although the advent of PC/TV/DVD combis will herald the proliferation of widescreen monitors.

4:3 faces extinction

Sky digiboxes are VideoPlus-compatible, not all VCRs are digibox-compatible

DIGIBOX DILEMMA

I've heard that Sky digiboxes have problems with VideoPlus. Is this true? And which VCRs are digibox-compatible? I am currently looking for a new S-VHS VCR, perhaps the Philips VR1000.

Anthony Haggitt
via email

Sky digiboxes will work with VideoPlus. Most, but not all, VCRs are digibox-compatible, but even then some only work with certain digiboxes. Call the manufacturer with your digibox model to check.

GEOMETRY TEST

Having been a keen reader of your magazine for some time now, it amazes me how blasé you have become about the geometry of widescreen TVs. For example, in your review of the Sony KV-32FQ75 (October issue) you failed to address the set's geometry at all. Surely having straight lines across the top, bottom and sides plus a tilt-free image isn't too much to ask.

When I visited Currys and Comet, I was gobsmacked to see how many TVs had poor geometry. Sony was the main culprit, but around 20 per cent of sets on display were unbelievably poor.

I recently purchased a Toshiba 32WD98B on which the image bent from left to right at the top, and also sloped significantly at the bottom from left to right. I took it back to the dealer (RGB), who fixed it.

But now it curves at the top left, so any broadcast with text exhibits an irritating curve. Also, terrestrial widescreen broadcasts are not centred vertically. This has to be adjusted via the onscreen menus.

RGB now seems to have washed its hands of the matter. In each conversation I am told that the set is 'to specification,' whatever that means. Having spent £1,000 of my hard-earned cash I'm not particularly pleased with this outcome.

Richard Bell
via email

We're planning a feature on TV tube technology in the near future, but in the meantime, geometry is the Achilles' heel of flatscreen TVs. The sets which we see are usually good, and if they aren't then we always say so. The basic problem is twofold. Factory tolerance is very low and it's nigh-on impossible to improve the geometry once the set has been built.

Flat and wide – but is it straight?

Write in to: *Video Mail*, *What Video & TV*, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TW. Or email us at: letters@whatvideotv.com including your full name and postal address

DAMN CAM

I sympathise with Mr Jones (*Where is My Module?*) in your October *Video Mail*. He has been waiting since September '99 for his conditional access module (CAM). I also have a Sony IDTV, and wasn't told when buying it that I needed anything else to receive further channels from ONdigital.

I contacted ONdigital and was told that I would have the CAM within a week. This didn't happen. This happened time and again, but after six weeks I still don't have my CAM. Now ONdigital has promised to send me a set-top box, which it will replace with a CAM when they come into stock.

I think someone has lost the plot here, as the reason you buy an IDTV is to avoid having an ugly box sitting on top of it. I'm very disappointed with this whole saga, as both Sony and ONdigital have been no help at all.

Mr Stephen Duncan
via email

ONdigital CAMs – here at last

At long last the CAM debacle is grinding to a close. We now know that fully functioning CAMs are being distributed. Any reader who's waiting for one can call ONdigital on ☎ 0808 1000101.

BOND'S BIND

My DVD of *The World is not Enough* played fine for about five viewings, after which it displayed artefacts and breaks in sound about halfway through the film. *Thunderball* has the same problem.

My player seems fine with other DVDs, including Bond movies. Have any other readers had this problem? Is it my player or these two discs?

Sandra Large
via email

We've not heard of any problems with these discs and suspect that your player may be at fault, as there's no reason why a disc would be OK one minute and not the next.

ANGRY OF CYBERSPACE

I think that most people who read your magazine subscribe via work, and as a result I don't think you should assume that all your readers are:
a) Male,
or b) Interested in a cheap thrill at work.

If your magazine is aimed at professionals in the electronics industry and is supposed to be informative, I find it totally insulting that you included images of half-clad women to illustrate the story about hardcore porn (October issue).

Was the story supposed to be serious, relevant and well written, or just an insult to any female that reads your magazine?

Not Very Happy
via email

Licence to kill DVD playback?

We're sorry you feel so upset by the pictures in Cathode Rai, *but you couldn't be more wrong about our reasons for including them. They are there simply to illustrate the article. In his column Kulwinder Singh Rai was making a serious point about the availability of hardcore porn in the UK. The pictures are neither rude nor offensive, and they have not been used out of context.*

You are correct in assuming that most of our readers are male, but in fact the vast majority of our readers buy the magazine at the newsstand (approximately 30,000 every month). What Video & TV *isn't aimed at professionals but at consumers, if you studied the magazine more closely you would realise this.*

COOL ON CURRYS

My Currys-bought Grundig Arganto 32in IDTV displays vertical bands running across the picture. These lines are present on all AV inputs, and when no aerial/kit is connected.

They become more apparent when the brightness control is used and the picture lightened, or when watching the TV in low-light conditions. Grundig's technical support indicated that this line structure should not be present and that it is a fault.

Currys' Mastercare engineer attributed it to the specifications and design, and said that the TV is working correctly. Grundig, however, tells me that it would not produce a TV with onscreen line patterns, and Currys should fix it under the warranty.

Currys, on the other hand, refuses to take any further action, saying that this line pattern is present on all Arganto models and cannot be fixed. Currys will not replace the set.

In your review of the Arganto model in the March issue this line pattern is not mentioned, and it scores 9 out of 10 for picture quality. I've checked out other IDTV brands, and these light and dark bands are not present on them.

Alan Russell
Glasgow

There's no doubt that Mr Russell's TV is a faulty sample. We contacted Grundig, which agrees with us, and has intervened to help Mr Russell. Currys' reaction is disappointing, to say the least ❐

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GAS BAGS

In this month's report on all things American, David Smith marvels at how far his dollars go... unless he's buying cable TV

Who would complain about petrol for 32p a litre? Americans

Americans are used to getting things cheap. They just don't know it. Take petrol. Americans are appalled at how much they have to pay for 'gas'. It is considered to be the birthright of all Americans to fill the tank of, well, a tank, and hand over a few cents for the privilege.

Escalating prices have recently led to serious debate on television, doom-laden newspaper headlines and the vague fear of riots. In a country where the right to bear arms is warmly embraced, this situation is not to be taken lightly.

The petrol blockades in Europe barely registered on US news channels, but those who did pay attention agreed that such action was entirely possible in the US if prices kept rising.

"A feature-packed Sony Nicam VCR is under £100"

So exactly how much are Americans asked to pay for their petrol? Around $1.80 (roughly £1.20) a gallon, or 32p a litre.

Americans still talk with bitterness about Jimmy Carter removing price regulation from petrol (when it stood at an unbelievable 32 cents a gallon), in the inspired belief that competition would actually drive the price lower. So much for that idea.

Only visitors such as myself can see just how good the Americans have it. For example, when I wandered into Sears to buy a VCR, I walked out (grinning stupidly) with a sleek, feature-packed Sony Nicam deck for just under £100.

It just didn't seem right, but even though I expected a sales assistant to come rushing after me, with a panicked expression and the correct price tag in hand, I made it into my waiting taxi and was on my way home without a hitch.

SO SUE ME

However, not everything about moving to the US is good. Apart from the low prices and cavalier attitude to firearms, perhaps the most striking aspect of life here is the fear of getting sued, and it was about to cost me dearly.

If you fall over in the street you can sue somebody for it. If somebody rushes to help you but doesn't actually cure you on the spot, you can sue them. If your doctor then does an imperfect job of rubbing liniment onto your bruise, you can sue him. You will get thousands.

This has made Americans scared to take responsibility for anything. At all. When I asked whether I could get satellite TV installed in my new apartment, I thought my biggest problem would be convincing the landlord that a satellite dish is not an ugly appendage to the roof of a house.

Far from it. My landlord was most concerned that if the workman fell off the roof while installing the dish, he would sue. I was told to make do with cable.

Making do with cable was something I tried in London, and wasn't something I was keen to try again. But with no other option I arranged for installation of a digital cable system. At least, I thought, it will be cheap.

HOW MUCH?

Not so. To sign up to all the channels would cost me a staggering $100 per month – nearly £70. That was twice what I paid for Sky digital in the UK.

There was a cheaper option, however. For $70 a month I could subscribe to a set of channels where the film I wanted to see was always on one of the channels I was not subscribed to. Thinking this was as good as it would get, I signed up.

So here I am, with my amazingly inexpensive VCR and my amazingly expensive cable TV system. And I know that every day I spend in the US is a day closer to believing that $1.80 is a high price to pay for a gallon of gas, and a day closer to making it impossible to go back to the UK and its crippling petrol prices.

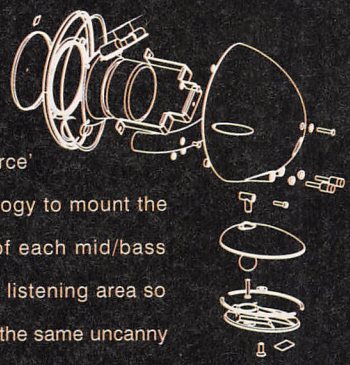
To add insult to injury, the picture quality on my cable TV is poor. Some things, at least, are the same over here ❐

Fancy one of these for under £100? Just hop on a plane to the US

David Smith worked at WV Publications as a sub-editor, writer and assistant editor from 1994-1997. He is now a freelance journalist based in Los Angeles

For your future entertainment

Once you get a taste for 3-D cinema sound, there's a temptation to buy big boxes to reproduce the experience at home. Fine if you live in an auditorium. But if you don't, check out KEF's radical new home entertainment systems.



The secret's in the Uni-Q® 'point source' drivers. Using aerospace technology to mount the tweeter at the acoustic centre of each mid/bass cone, you get an ultra-wide listening area so everyone in the room enjoys the same uncanny sense of 'being there' wherever they sit.

Identical Uni-Q® drivers (at 4" across, the smallest ever made) in each satellite speaker ensure the perfect tonal match for a seamless sound stage. And with magnetic shielding and cast aluminium cabinets with built-in adjustable stands for horizontal or wall mounting, you can place them wherever you want.

The KMS 2002 music system features two main speakers and an active subwoofer with its own 120W amplifier; KHT 2005 is a full 5.1 home theatre system featuring four surrounds and a centre speaker complementing the sub. Either way, you'll have a set-up that punches way beyond its size.

And that's entertainment.

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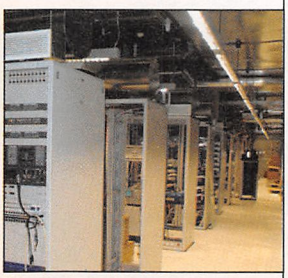
on the RECORD

Exactly why have ONdigital subscribers suffered so many reception problems? Technical editor Bob Tomalski puts this question to ONdigital's chief technical officer, and finds out about ONnet, the broadcaster's STB internet solution

Kieron Edwards and Simon Dore are charged with bringing ONdigital's latest technologies to market



ONdigital's heart – the servers used to multiplex the MPEG signal

This story is living history. On Sunday 15 November 1998 the UK became the first country in the world to switch on digital terrestrial television (DTTV). It was an event as significant as the launch of ITV in 1955 or the development of colour in 1964, because the start of DTTV heralds the beginning of the end of today's analogue TV broadcasting.

As early as 2010 PAL TV could be ditched in favour of digital. There's no ignoring it. There's no escaping it. Yet many *What Video & TV* readers tell us they fear it.

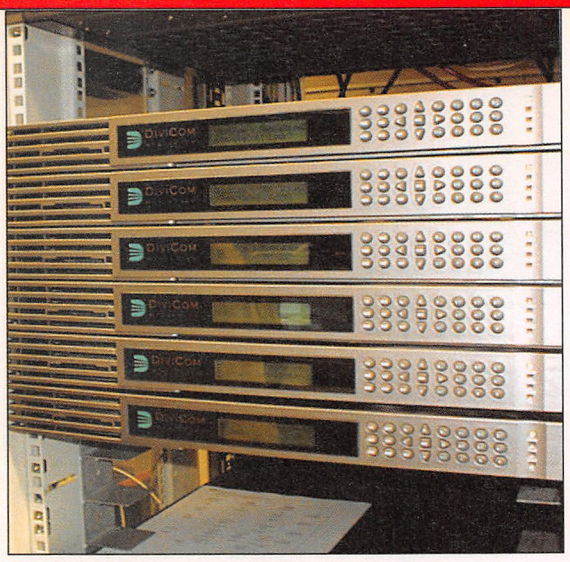
Why? Because DTTV can be more problematic. With analogue, small defects in reception such as minor ghosting or interruptions in signal cause minimal disturbance to the picture. With digital, that same glitch can cause the picture to freeze or the sound to go out of sync for minutes, thus losing the thread of the programme.

Clearly DTTV requires careful aerial installation, lower-loss feeder cables and improved distribution systems if artefacts are to be avoided. But that's not all. The frequencies and power levels used for DTTV are now to be tweaked to equalise reception throughout the UK.

When digital TV was first set up, six multiplexes or 'muxes' – frequencies carrying groups of digital TV stations – were allocated. Some are designed to sit alongside existing analogue channels, others are placed further down the UHF band.

In both cases, the transmission power of DTTV is just a fraction (-20dB) of analogue's. This is to guard against interference and because COFDM (Coded Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiplex) modulation requires less signal than today's systems which use AM or FM. Such low-level signals can cause problems, especially with portable TVs that might use set-top aerials which are susceptible to local interference.

The six digital muxes are not of equal coverage. In the original allocation of DTTV licences the most widely received mux went to the BBC, the next to ITV, then the SDN consortium and the final three were allocated to ONdigital.



Each ONdigital channel is encoded to MPEG using a multiplexer

Against this background I discussed digital reception problems and related issues with Simon Dore, ONdigital's chief technical officer.

CAN DTTV BE IMPROVED NOW?

Recent months have seen ONdigital working with other DTTV broadcasters to improve reception, by changing the frequencies and power levels of groups of transmitters to give better reception of the weaker digital channels. Simon Dore explains: 'ONdigital is at the tail end of the muxes and we've got the furthest to go. Equalising the signal cannot be achieved by adjusting only a single transmitter because of its effect on surrounding transmitters.

'Crystal Palace is an example. There were five other transmitters that needed to be adjusted in order to make gains in the London area. The five, including Crystal Palace, were Hemel Hempstead, Hannington, Oxford and Sandy Heath.

'There's a very complex inter-relationship of channel allocations, powers and regional boundaries which potentially will shift when you change any one transmitter. Antenna polarity and aerial groups are both involved.

'We allocated test frequencies, sent a mail shot to everyone explaining possible interference and gave a special number to call. Then we retuned people's sets in advance of the changes.'

I wondered if such work angered viewers who might require new aerials and retuning. Didn't this shatter the digital TV dream?

'Not at all. We are being proactive in changing aerials and channels for digital subscribers, so they were extremely grateful that we did it before the change occurred.

'Because we are working within such conservative boundaries for the transmission of DTT – to protect existing analogue transmissions – we are finding that much of what we do produces a far less [negative] effect than you might expect.'

Could such work account for the 'patterning' effect experienced by some viewers of Crystal Palace BBC analogue services? Dore refutes such a suggestion.

'It's unlikely. We are encouraged to be conservative with our transmitter power for digital TV – this is to protect analogue viewers.

ONDIGITAL ON THE NET

ONdigital's latest way of grabbing the hearts and wallets of subscribers is to offer internet access via an add-on called the ONnet box. For just £5 per month and 2p per minute (peak) and 1p per minute (off-peak), you can browse the Web, send and receive emails and even attach video grabs and audio recordings.

A full test of ONnet will appear in *What Video & TV* in the future, but initial tests show that it works well, albeit with minor niggles.

We spoke to Kieron Edwards, ONdigital's head of interactive platforms, about this innovation.

WV

Why bother developing ONnet? Doesn't every 'netter have a PC?

ONDIGITAL

Not everyone has, or wants a PC. We believe that DTT is a fabulous way of bringing online and TV services together. We were keen to start that process of convergence. We have an MHEG (digital text) engine in the existing ONdigital set-top box (STB) and Media Highway operating system that allows us to present multimedia content.

WV

So why the extra box and cable clutter?

ONDIGITAL

It soon became apparent that the existing STB hardware could not deliver the internet experience as we would wish. Technically the modem, processor and memory would not render pages at the speed that we wanted. The solution we've gone for gives as close a Web experience as possible. The number of protocols supported is good and therefore gives excellent compatibility with a large number of Web pages.

WV

What technology is used inside the ONnet box?

ONDIGITAL

Inside the ONnet box is a CPU that's equivalent to a 486 PC chip. It has 8Mb of RAM plus a 56k modem and customised browser working under a Linux kernel. The head-end is a standard ISP with customised operation to provide a navigation bar and systems for software upgrades.

WV

The internet is constantly changing. Web pages use different protocols, such as Java and Macromedia animation. On a PC it's easy to upgrade for these changes, but what of ONnet?

ONDIGITAL

Java is a virtual machine which runs a code that is downloaded and executed on a PC. ONnet does not support this, nor do any other internet TV boxes. It uses a heck of a lot of memory and CPU power.

Shockwave Flash is supported and works very well. As for Shockwave Director – not yet. RealAudio is supported, but it's an umbrella for different encoding/decoding systems. Generally it's supported by our browser, but there may be the odd website that uses codecs which are not yet supported. In future we will upgrade the support of plug-ins by offering upgrades to ONnet users.

WV

Do you have enough capacity at your head end to host the provision of an internet service to tens of thousands of subscribers?

ONDIGITAL

Obviously we monitor congestion across the platform. We have daily reports of port and server usage. Because we expect higher concurrency than standard ISPs we have made provision for a huge takeup. Our rollout plan allows for many thousands of ports, so people will not get the engaged tone.

Also, our system allows for internet addresses to be broadcast over-air, inviting instant access for viewers. By doing so, we invite a huge demand for a particular Web address, so we have scaled the system to cope with that.

WV

Finally, we have heard a rumour that future ONdigital STBs could offer direct reception of DAB (digital audio broadcasting). Are you looking into this?

ONDIGITAL

We have no intention of doing that at the moment, but we are mindful of all digital broadcasting in the UK. It's true that DTV and DAB both use COFDM. It may well be something that we will look into in the future. Technically it's feasible because it only requires another layer of receiving technology placed upon the existing COFDM electronics.

> **"The analogue signal often knocks over the digital one"**

'In fact I am convinced we are being asked to be over-cautious, and it is leading to a number of problems. Notably, the analogue signal knocks over digital on regular occasions.

'As for the patterning, it's difficult to say without knowing the facts of each case, but if I had to pick a cause I'd say that some are seeing artefacts caused by post-production on new digital material. Footage is often acquired on digital video (DV) and DVCPro, and that can produce artefacts when put through a linear analogue transmission system.'

WILL DIGITAL BLOCKING EVENTUALLY BE DEFEATED?

Many viewers who have installed DTTV have been disappointed to discover that some channels cannot be received and others suffer severe blocking. In all cases, it's a matter of signal reception, with old aerials and downlead cables not delivering enough RF to the receiver.

I asked Simon Dore if such brickbats will disappear with the switch-off of analogue. Will tomorrow's digital transmitters deliver the same power as today's rigs?

'It will never be necessary to run such high power because DTV is so much more spectrum-efficient. The power needed to deliver the same service is far, far less than the hundreds of thousands of kilowatts used today.

Set-top boxes are constantly evaluated for performance in ONdigital's lab

'The difficulties we face are not because the digital transmissions are weak, it's because the analogue signals are very high compared with digital. When analogue is eventually switched off – and assuming we can increase DTV by 10dB – it will be more than sufficient to give good reception almost everywhere.'

WILL DTTV DELIVER MORE CHANNELS?

Unlike satellite digital TV, which has huge capacity via groups of satellites beaming to Britain, DTTV is limited by the frequencies and power allocated to each digital mux. I asked Simon Dore if the number of TV channels could ever be increased using new technology?

O.D.O

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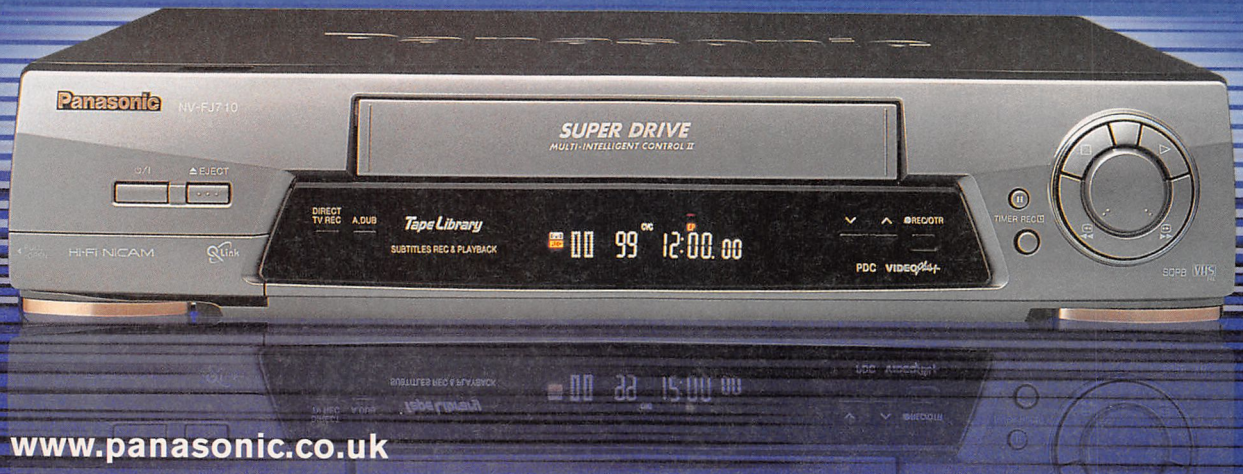


www.panasonic.co.uk

'When we planned our application as British Digital Broadcasting, we calculated we would have just four channels per mux. Since then, our MPEG compression suppliers have developed new algorithms to optimise our bandwidth. Consequently we are now running seven channels per mux.

'We believe we can go further, but ultimately we will bump against the laws of physics and no more channels will be forthcoming. Yet after analogue switch-off there will be more spectrum made available to DTV broadcasters. At least I hope there will.

'Also, I believe there is capacity within mux 1 and 2 which is not being used as efficiently as it should. We know the BBC is working hard to maintain its quality yet allow more capacity.'

WHY THE DELAY FOR CONDITIONAL ACCESS MODULES?

At the launch of DTTV there were few TVs with digital decoding built-in. The past two years have seen more models come to market, yet the majority of sets cannot receive pay-TV without the addition of a plug-in device known as a CAM (conditional access module).

Promised a year back, CAMs have only just arrived on the market, yet remain in short supply. I asked Simon Dore to explain the delay:

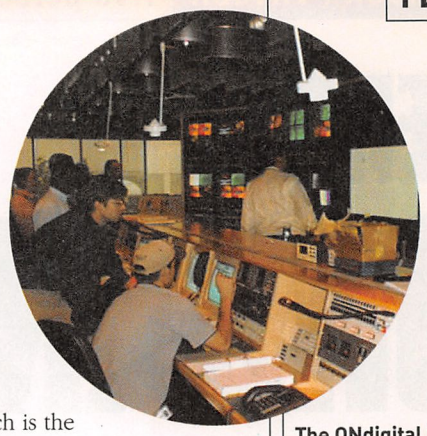
'The reasons for the delays are complex. The CAM has been ready for some time, but clearly as the platform operator it's not for us to control the development of TVs which we don't commission, subsidise or manufacture.

'Yet it was essential that the CAM worked with all digital TVs. So after we'd finished developing the CAM there was much work to do with manufacturers to check their products would function as they should.'

But the DVB standard which is the basis of DTTV is set in concrete in a 'bible' known as the D-Book. Surely broadcasters and TV manufacturers need only follow its specifications?

'Yes and no,' grins Dore. 'The D-Book can be interpreted in a number of ways which can cause problems. Also, there are extensions to the DVB standard which were not implemented from the outset. This has resulted in holes that must be filled.

'Our CAM has a uniform operating mode with all TVs. But to achieve that needed some time working with manufacturers. It's a bit like PC-cards. It took a couple of years before inter-operation with all laptops could be guaranteed. It's a similar issue with DTTV.' ❐



The ONdigital Play-out Centre, where channels are monitored

N E.R

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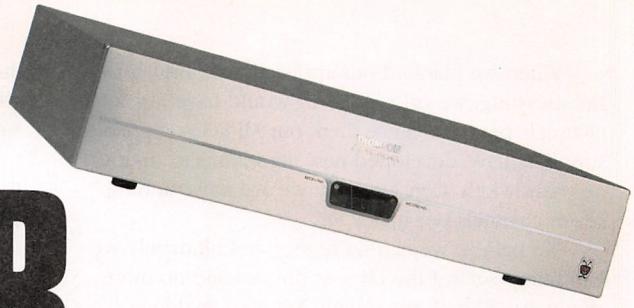


Thomson's £400 TiVo box is the first of a new breed of recording devices which will revolutionise the way we watch TV. Ian Calcutt unveils this remarkable device

Thanks to the explosion in PC use, the hard disk storage medium which sits inside a computer has become bigger in capacity but lower in cost. At the same time, video compression technology has improved, enabling video to be sent over the internet, put onto 5in DVDs and, of course, onto hard disks.

It has taken a while for the right elements to come together to form a hard disk video recorder and, as with DVD, the UK lags a year behind, but finally it's here. Welcome to the Personal Video Recorder (PVR).

The Thomson PVR10UK is the first of many PVRs. The video compression technology and software for this particular model is licensed by the US-based TiVo company. Sky is administering the subscription part of the service in the UK as well as marketing the recorder.

The PVR10UK has no digital receiver built-in, meaning it's not 'platform specific' (it will work with all analogue and digital channels). You do not need to be a Sky subscriber, as the link is merely a convenient business association.

Although some PC software provides PVR features, a PC doesn't sit with a lounge TV very conveniently. So what can a PVR do? It does more than simply record without tape. It can play back while recording on another part of the disk.

This could be the very same programme – ie you don't have to wait for something to end before starting to watch the recording – or you can pause the live programme if the phone rings and pick up where you left off. Or you can play a different recording altogether while the PVR records something new.

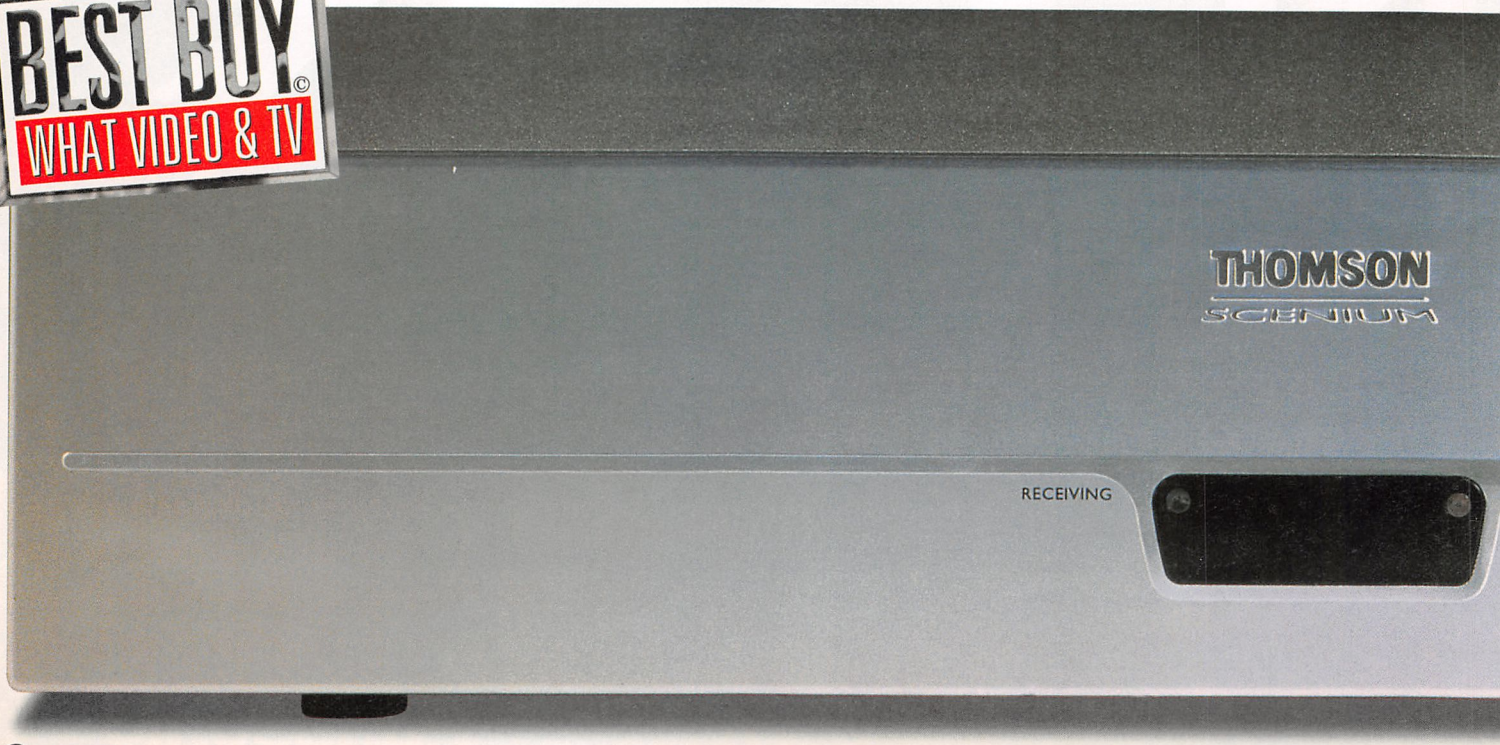
Its software also 'learns' – the much-heralded feature whereby it will search schedules and record (hopefully) intelligent suggestions. In short, it can totally transform how you use TV.

So does the PVR10UK live up to the hype? Is it too good to be true or so good no-one should be without one?

DESCRIPTION

A large, weighty silver box, the PVR is styled to suit Thomson's Scenium home entertainment products, though there is a total lack of any front-panel controls, just two LEDs and an infrared transmitter/receiver window.

At the back is a wealth of sockets including three Scarts (all RGB-capable), RF in/out



(as with VCRs) and a phone connection (like digital set-top boxes). There is no direct digital input or output of any kind, something which won't happen until copyright issues are resolved.

"It makes VHS seem awfully clunky and outdated"

The remote control looks like a cousin of Sky's acclaimed digibox handset. Cursor keys, surrounding function buttons and replay navigation keys are thoughtfully placed and ergonomic in design. It's a shame the zapper doesn't mimic many TV functions (just volume and standby) or digibox functions (channel only).

INSTALLATION

The three Scarts are for integrating the PVR into all but the most complex of TV environments. Any set-top box (analogue satellite, ONdigital, cable and Sky digital) plugs into the aux Scart.

TiVo uses composite video or RGB, and in bypass mode will also relay RGB signals from set-top boxes or VCRs (eg Thomson's VTH7090). The PVR's Scarts are also S-video wired, but the function has not been enabled in the software. Either the infrared extension cable or a front-panel IR 'blaster' can remotely control a set-top box.

The PVR10UK has an analogue terrestrial tuner for recording network TV (in conjunction with multichannel bundles or not), and a phone connection for downloading Programme Guide data and software upgrades.

Installation is not exactly plug and play, but assisted installation can be arranged by retailers. Many stages are automatic but the PVR must be guided according to which channels are used, a procedure which can take anything from 1-4hr.

The more channels selected, the longer the initial processing time and daily (free) phone update. When making a phone call, the PVR's front panel displays an orange LED. This goes red when recording a programme.

Analogue terrestrial channels are unfortunately listed and sorted by frequency. For example, in the South-East, ITV is called '23 ICAR' (meaning channel 23, ITV Carlton, though it doesn't tell you this), and the Programme Guide's order runs ITV, BBC2, C4, BBC1, C5.

Sky or ONdigital viewers may want to use the digital versions of these stations, but beware of the increased possibility of schedule clashes with other channels.

Shapely and neat with the right buttons in the right places

OPERATION

In some ways the PVR operates like a high-end VCR and digibox hybrid. Except for live TV pausing, the PVR is useless without a TiVo subscription (£10 a month or £199 lifetime flat fee). This is on top of the £400 purchase price.

The Programme Guide is like Sky digital's, only clearer and more interactive (Murdoch's people could actually learn a thing or two from TiVo about interface design).

Listings can be browsed by time, channel, name or genre. You can select from your specified favourite channels, TiVo's highlights section or suggestions chosen by the PVR based on your usage and preferences.

Recordings made by the PVR on its own accord always take second place to user-specified programmes, and they are also the first to be deleted if disk space runs out.

From any programme list it's easy to choose a show for recording or simply rate it (using Thumbs Up or Down keys) to affect the PVR's suggestions. Recordings can be made as one-offs or in a Season Pass, where the PVR will catch every episode of a series on a channel.

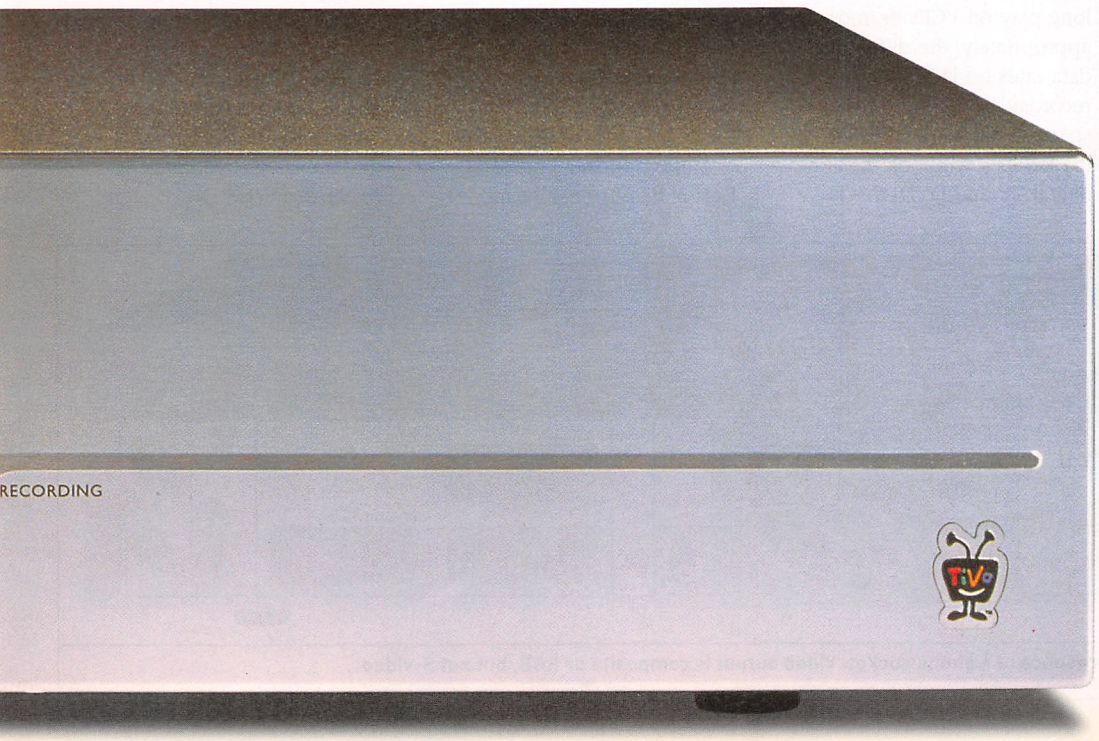
It should distinguish between repeat showings but only if that data is available. By default the PVR will record it anyway, as it can always be discarded.

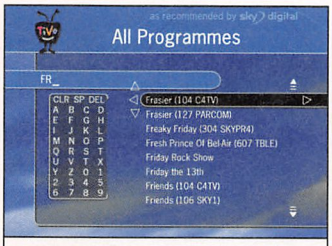
The PVR stores schedule data (where available) for up to two weeks ahead. Manual timer recordings can be set for any day/month/year. Because everything is disk-based, nothing is erased if the power fails.

Recordings are made in any of the four quality modes (Best, High, Medium or Basic). Automatic recording of TiVo Suggestions can be turned off and there are several deletion options for all recordings (ie keep or delete in two days) which can be modified at any time. For archiving, 'Save to VCR' feeds a real-time output to a VCR (previously set recordings still take place but other functions are locked).

When watching live TV through the PVR it will buffer a rolling 30min of the broadcast in Best Quality from the moment the channel was selected. If Pause is pressed the picture freezes and the PVR remembers your place while it continues to record (again, up to 30min unless you've pressed Record to make it keep going). If the channel is changed on the PVR the 30min buffer restarts.

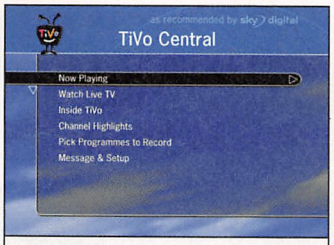
A status bar appears when any playback function is accessed (or by pressing Play again during playback). It shows the timeline of the programme and the current status and position of playback and recording (if any is still happening). ➤





TiVo lists all broadcasts alphabetically

Once a programme is selected you can specify recording options



TiVo central is the starting point for all playback, record and preference menus

A status bar shows how a recording is progressing

Contrary to some reports, the TiVo PVR won't edit ads from recordings, but at maximum forward search, ads can be skipped manually in under 7sec. Because at that speed you're likely to miss some of the programme when it resumes, there's an auto skip-back feature.

The box won't override security preferences on digiboxes (eg PIN-code locks or purchasing restrictions on pay-per-view events). However, recorded programmes can be replayed easily by anyone because there is currently no parental lock on the TiVo box. Given its total reliance on handset control, cautious parents can just hide the remote.

Thomson's PVR will record Macrovision-protected broadcasts (such as Sky Box Office) to disk, but restore Macrovision for VCR output to discourage tape recording of such material.

Using the TV Guide is by far the easiest method to program events, although there's no facility for adding end time to settings made here. The manual timer can be used for expected overruns, but sadly there's no VideoPlus to make this option quicker.

A memo or bookmark feature would be a good addition to the Pause function (two or more people may be watching when one has to answer the door, for example).

Even when programmes are deleted they're still there technically, but there's no Undo feature. The only protection is a Confirm Delete screen, but after that, too late.

A final concern is that the set-top control cannot yet switch on or off by remote, so equipment must be left powered up. The PVR itself is also always on, burning up to 40W all day.

PERFORMANCE

The Thomson/TiVo PVR uses a proprietary variant of MPEG2, called Quantum Quickview Technology, to compress digital recordings onto the hard disk. The resulting picture quality depends on the amount of data allocated.

Like standard play and long play on VCRs or, more appropriately, the different data rates on D-VHS (and soon recordable DVD), the more space a recording takes up, the better it will look. Unlike digital TV and DVD, this is something in the hands of the end user.

Best Quality mode is impressive, but it will swallow hard disk capacity like a greedy infant. Even so, just under 14hr on a 40Gb disk is more than most tapes or removable discs. At this level, performance is akin to D-VHS or DVD in most ways, although frequency response (ability to deal with fine detail) was poor on our sample which, we have to point out, was a preproduction prototype (final models should be better). Viewing through RGB on a suitable TV also helps enormously.

High Quality (up to 22hr) is worthy of the description, matching Sky digital on a good day. It's suitable for most programmes, especially if recording from UK digital TV.

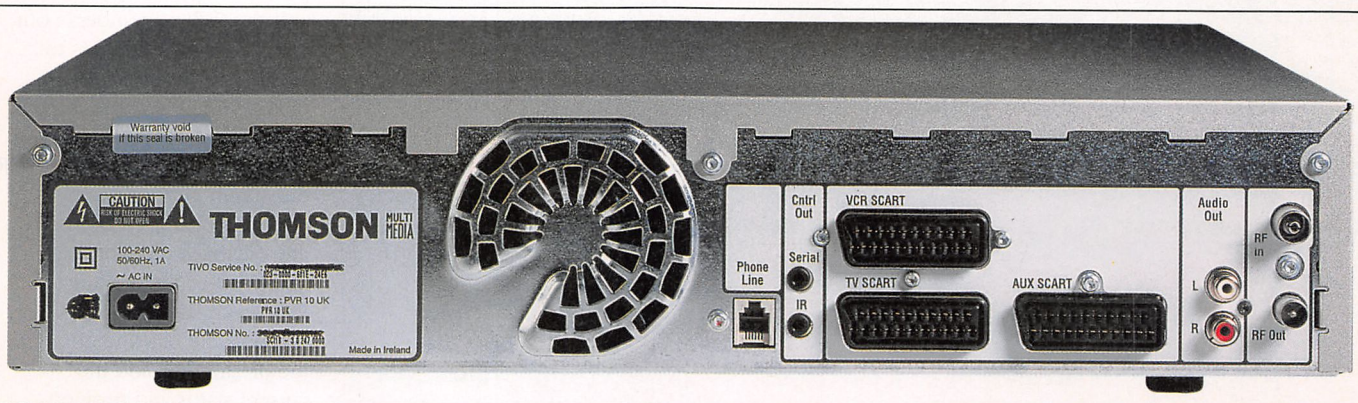
In all modes, colour and stability are commendable but Medium Quality (28hr max) copes less well with fast motion. An action movie, sport or cartoon will look poor in Standard, whereas for news it's quite acceptable.

At the opposite end of Best is Basic (the 46hr mode) but it honestly should have been called Worst. Almost any movement will create serious macro blocking and the overall image pulsates with mosaic effects.

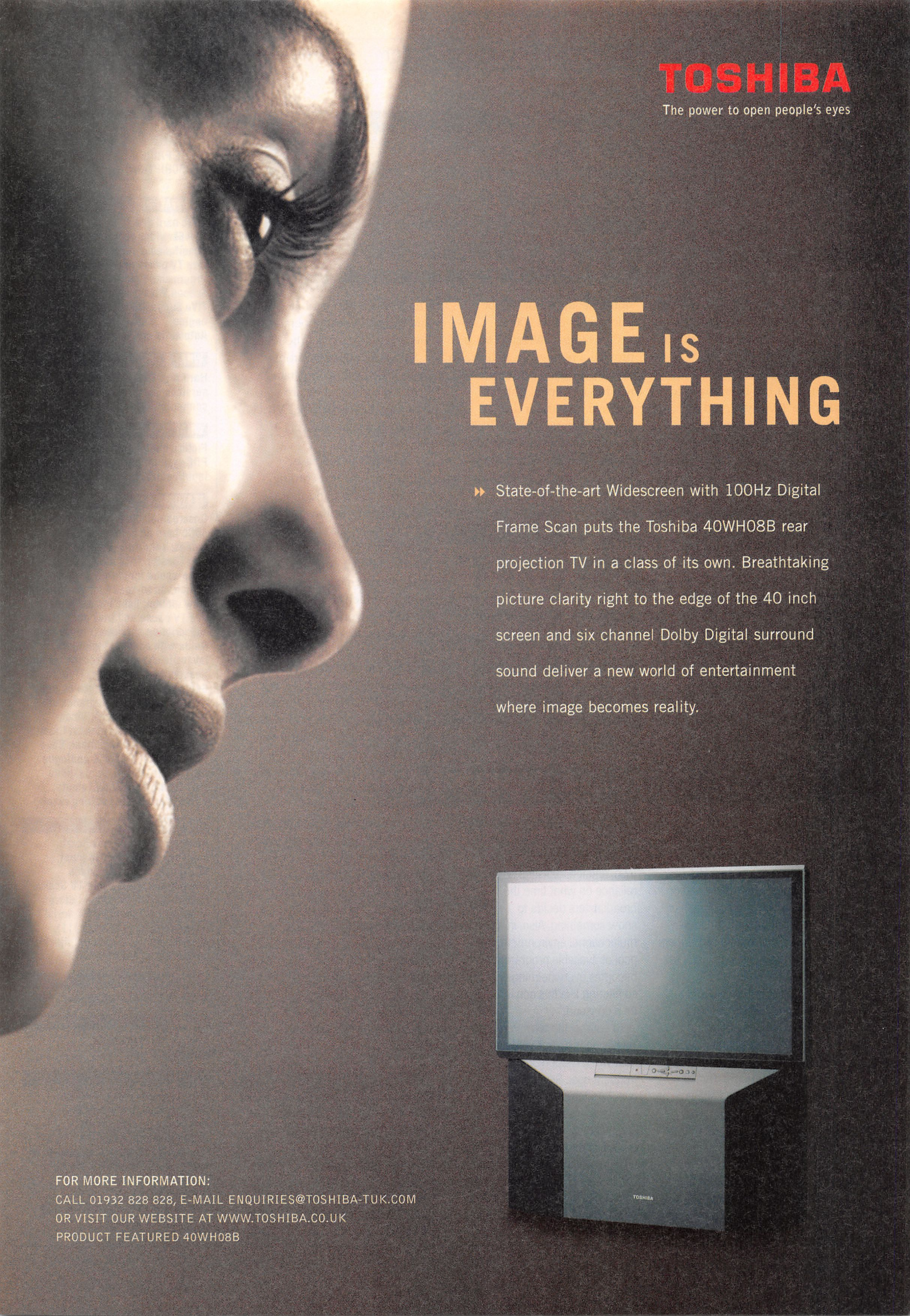
Even at the Best quality, the constant MPEG encoding being done on the fly leads to slight artefacts, mainly motion blocking – more like the subtle DVD kind than the more noticeable digital TV variety. However, if viewing digital TV via PVR or if using a 100Hz TV, there could be small glitches encountered through the sheer amount of digital processing occurring at each stage.

Trick play modes are superb, with perfect still frames, smooth slow motion and watchable fast scanning modes. Disk reaction is near-instantaneous, much closer to DVD than videotape.

Don't be put off by the low frequency response figure (see *Specifications*). This is a consequence of filtering applied when encoding broadcast material to reduce video noise. High-frequency detail is also lost. The important point is that the subjective image is better than VHS.



This could be a VCR except for the presence of a phone socket. Video output is composite or RGB, but not S-video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CONCLUSION

Much effort has been made to tailor the TiVo system to the foibles of UK broadcasting. As such, it's an impressive piece of work. The price will seem high to many – even though we're told it's being sold below cost – and it's practically useless without subscribing, effectively turning it into a £600 product.

However, it's so much more sophisticated than a VCR that it can't be thought of in those terms. Its picture quality is better than VHS but the hard disk allows even more, such as simultaneous recording and playback, trick play on 'live' TV and automated recording. Recordable DVD may allow similar features but will be priced at over £1,000.

One thing a PVR can't do is provide a removable archive. To save for posterity, programmes need to be copied onto an external cassette or disc. For timeshifting though, PVRs are undoubtedly the way to go, especially those which always recycle a handful of increasingly shabby blank videotapes.

"An impressive piece of work"

The subscription fee will be controversial but, like it or not, this is the future. In time the hardware should become so inexpensive that the subscription fee is the most meaningful factor – for both the company and the consumer. Think about how mobile phones and digital TV now operate in the UK and you'll get the idea.

So where do we go from here? PVRs will be integrated into compatible hardware (like Pace's Sky digibox PVR with twin digital receivers – see *News*).

Capacity will increase, permitting longer recording at higher quality, and more sophisticated versions may come for those who like cutting-edge technology, probably hired like rental cars on a continual upgrade scheme.

Improvements could be made for TiVo to work at its best in the UK, but it's an audacious start, aided by the fact that software updates are both automatic and painless. It's already good but it can and will get even better.

The PVR is a radical invention and like all such developments, it takes getting used to. After using it for a few days though, VHS starts to seem awfully clunky and outdated.

Early adopters and advanced users will love it and we think the public at large will come around to the idea eventually, even if it's not exactly TiVo they end up buying into – there are multiple alternatives in development (including broadband telephone or cable video on demand).

As it stands, this is a key indication of where video is heading. It's a qualified thumbs-up for TiVo, though ❐

TEACHING TIVO PREFERENCES

It takes a while for TiVo's Suggestions list to evolve. At first a default list of programmes will be displayed, but once a few programmes have been rated or recorded it gets more astute. For instance, put a thumbs-up for *Frasier* or *Seinfeld* and see *Cheers* and *Taxi* join the suggestions list.

Favour *The League of Gentlemen* or *Father Ted* and *Monty Python* or *The Royle Family* may appear. Some of the Guide's genres can be vague. *Buffy*, however, is classed Drama/Fantasy/Horror/Thriller, while a sitcom is just a sitcom – although cast and channel may be a factor in the choices TiVo can make.

Once a day or two's programmes of your own (or the PVR's) choices are on the hard disk, it's clear what TiVo's 'Personal Television' trademark really means. Suddenly schedules become utterly meaningless as you can virtually compile your own, and it diminishes any reliance on what time the broadcasters decide to show something. Also, in a multichannel environment, the pool of available programmes becomes overwhelming, so filtering like this can be a godsend.

Of course, the term Personal Television means it works at best when it's personal to one frequent user. Several users of one PVR will simply dilute the effectiveness of the preference engine. It will not know whether to record sport, comedy, drama, etc, unless explicitly told to do so. As yet, there's no facility for different user profiles within one PVR. We're sure this will come – either that, or people will need their own PVR.

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

The shape of things to come which could already make your VCR gather dust

PICTURE (BEST/RGB)	9/10
SOUND	8/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	9/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

THOMSON TiVo PVR10UK

GUIDE PRICE.....£400 (PLUS SUBSCRIPTION)

KEY FEATURES

40Gb hard disk
14-46hr video recording capacity
Simultaneous recording/playback
Live TV pause and trick play
Programme Guide
Season Pass recording
TiVo Suggestions & preference engine
Automatic online software upgrades

WHAT'S GOOD

Hard disk PVR features; TiVo services; multi-platform compatibility; ease of use

WHAT'S BAD

Picture quality in Basic mode; no PDC-type feature; no direct digital input/output

FEATURES

Onscreen display; guided setup; 40Gb hard disk; four recording modes: 14hr max (Best) to 46hr max (Basic); trick play (pause; three-speed forward & reverse search, three-speed forward/reverse slow motion; 8sec instant replay); live TV pause and trick play; TiVo subscription services (Programme Guide with channel highlights, favourite channels & record setting, Season Pass recording, TiVo Suggestions & preference engine, automatic software upgrades via freephone connection); Nicam stereo; 16:9 detect; manual timer; timer conflict management; Save to VCR mode; digital & analogue set-top box control; demo video clip; multibrand TV/AV remote; PVR restart; factory setting reset

SOCKETS

Rear: three Scarts (aux Scart: composite video & RGB input; VCR Scart: composite video input/output, RGB input; TV Scart: composite & RGB output); stereo audio output (phonos); RF aerial in/out; telephone input (RJ11); infrared emitter output (minijack); serial control out (minijack)

DIMENSIONS

435(w) x 335(d) x 100(h)mm

CONTACT

TiVo ☎ 08702 418486
www.tivo.com

TEST DATA

Preproduction model in Best Quality mode (see comments in* Performance *section):
Dynamic range: excellent
Frequency response (composite) at 4MHz: -11.92dB (below average)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -70.4dB (excellent)
Chroma AM/PM: -58.2dB/-55.1dB (excellent/excellent)
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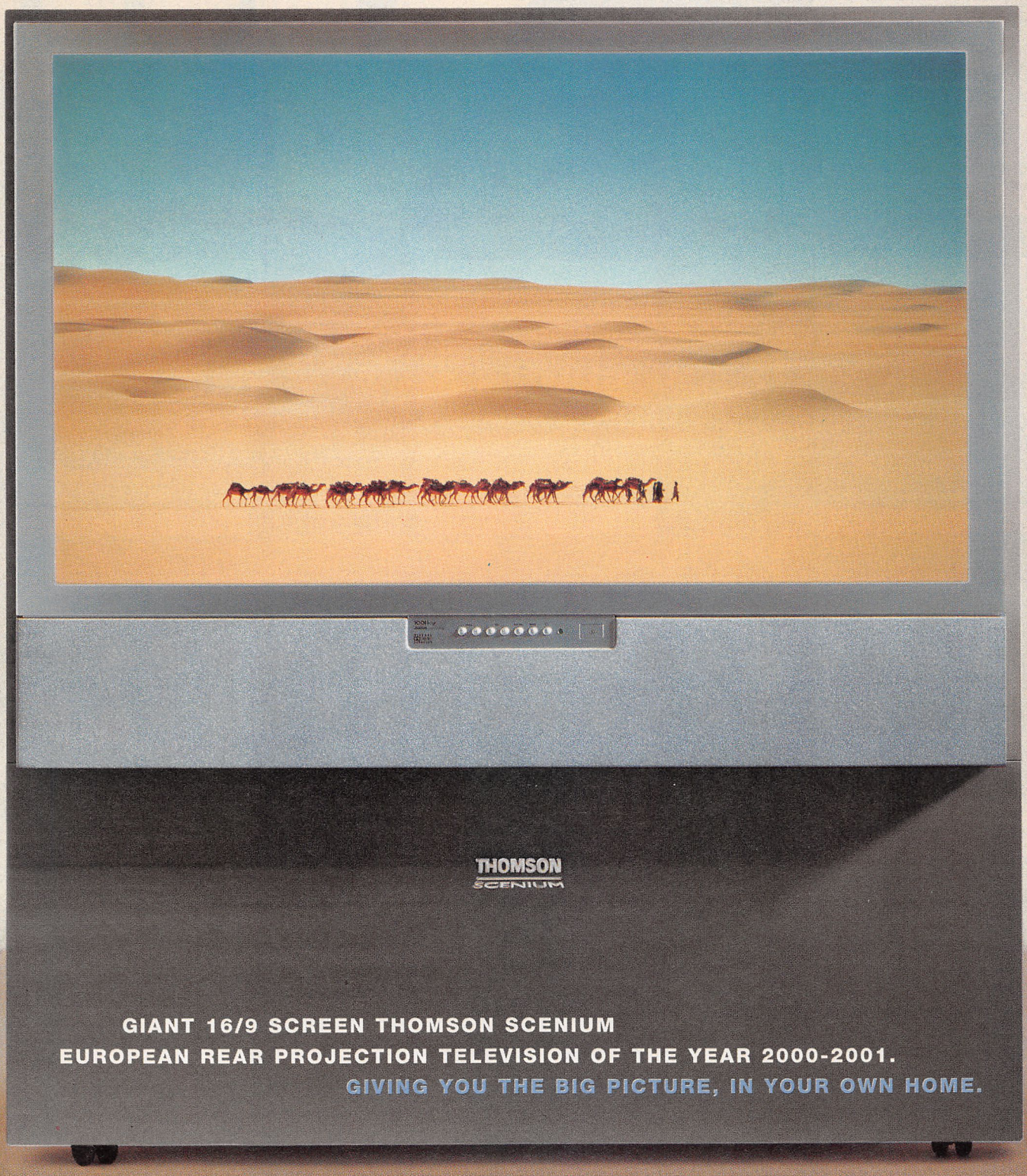

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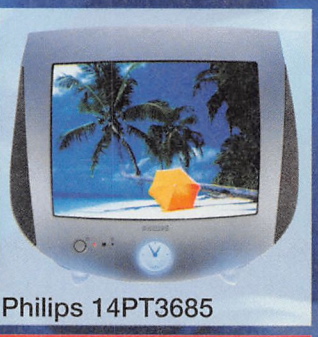
Sony SLVSE800

comet price £229.70

unbeatable price £190.99



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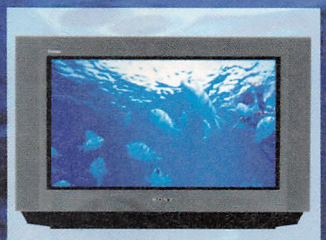

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Sharp LC150M2E

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Sony HTK315

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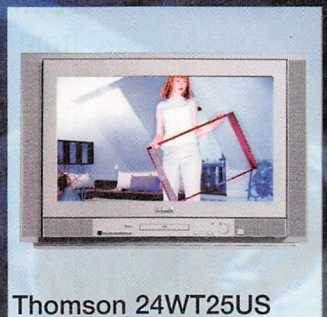

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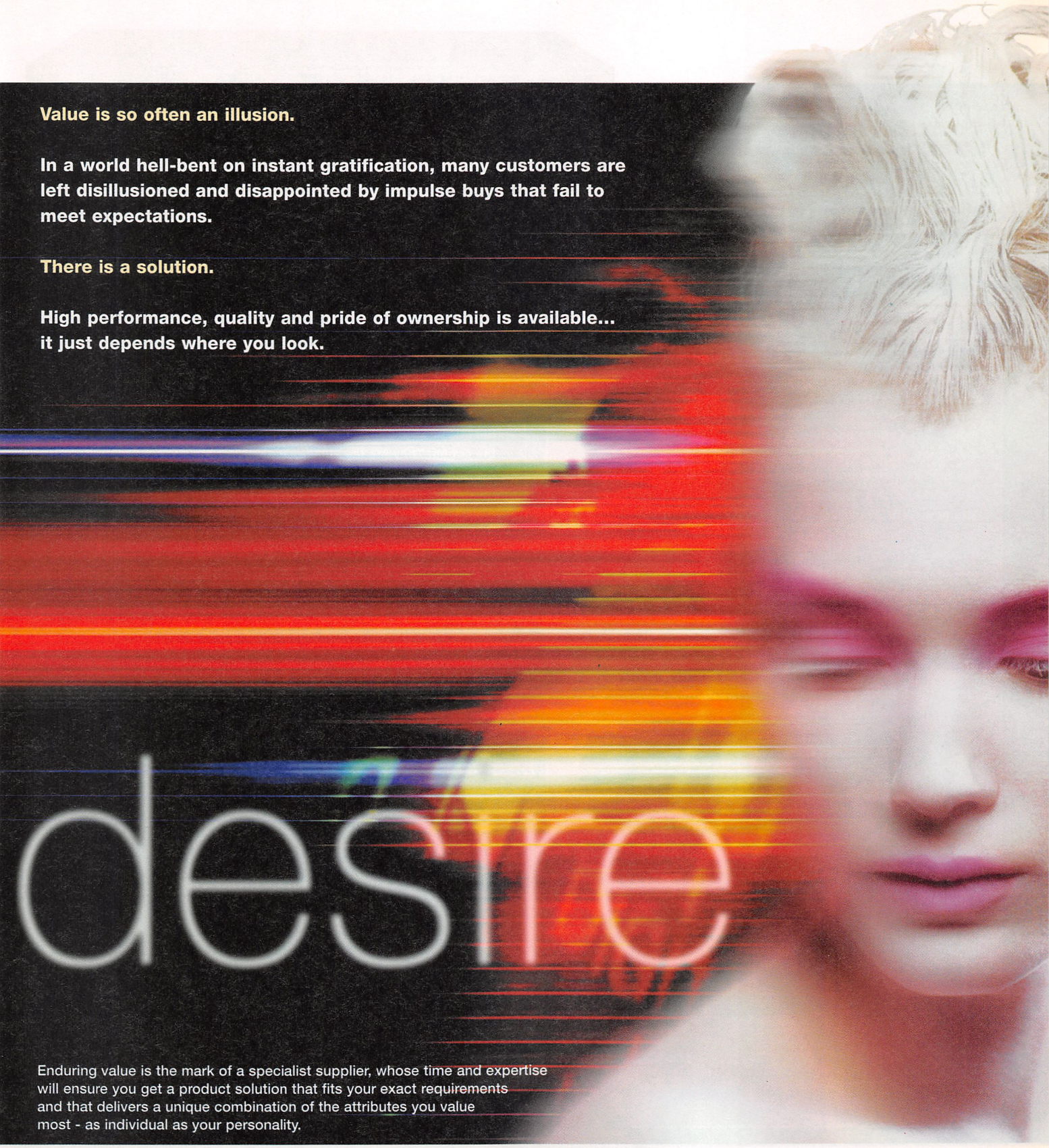

Enduring value is the mark of a specialist supplier, whose time and expertise will ensure you get a product solution that fits your exact requirements and that delivers a unique combination of the attributes you value most - as individual as your personality.

This is how CSE approaches the audio/visual market. Its philosophy is simple, but distilled from decades of experience. Every product in the CSE portfolio has been selected for its ability to address a specialist need. There are many award-winning products in the list, but a "best buy" is only the beginning.

CSE dealer/installers will suggest system components not just for their excellent audio and video performance, but for their capacity to work synergistically with one another to create an optimum solution. One which delivers greater performance and satisfaction than the sum of its parts, making the most of your money and ensuring long-term enjoyment from your investment. It's the difference between a simple "best buy" and something altogether more desirable.

CSE solutions

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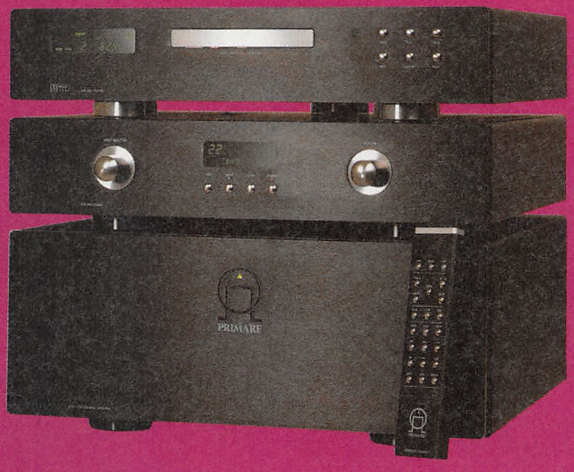
objects of desire

the source

It's a fact: Choose this component carefully, because information lost here, is lost for good - you'll never get it back no matter how fine the rest of the system. Use the highest quality video and digital connections possible, they really do make a substantial difference.

Much acclaimed Scandinavian brand Primare has entered the A/V market with a flourish.

Two new DVD/CD players are available from a manufacturer famous for its esoteric hi-fi products. Believe it or not, some notable A/V reviewers actually listen to a system's ability to reproduce stereo as a measure of its fidelity, before they ever tackle multi-channel stuff. Given its heritage, Primare is already way ahead in this regard, and is proving popular as a solution for the music lover as much as the movie lover. Not only is the sound amongst the finest available, Primare commitment to video has engineered an advanced video board, to ensure the picture is as pure.



Perfect partners: Try the Primare V20 DVD player with Primare's own P30 processor and A30.5 5-Channel amplifier, with the Boston System10k and Boston PV800 sub-woofer.

after the source, the time machine

It's a fact: Do you watch films rather than listen to music? Do you only have one video source? Probably not, so it is worth considering a processors ability to handle multi-channel music accurately and to allow system expansion with sufficient AV inputs.

Good processors recreate the essential ambient clues introduced in the mix or at the time of recording, to place the listener at the core of the action. They are the "time machines" of the system using ultra-fast processing and low distortion circuits to ensure signals arrive at the right place and time to create the "being there" experience.

Lexicon - the ultimate time machines

The acknowledged kings of processing are the Lexicon MC-1 and DC-2. Lexicon builds most of the signal processing gear used in the World's top recording studios so it makes sense that during replay in the home, they invariably produce the most stunning resolution and quality. Lexicon has recently introduced a multi-channel revert unit that is set to revolutionise the quality of music DVDs and 5.1 CD recordings. Both the MC-1 and DC-2 have Dolby Digital, dts and Dolby Digital THX Surround EX decoding on board, as well as Lexicon's own proprietary "Logic 7" 7-channel surround.

Parasound – american esoterica you can afford

Parasound is built on quality. This California-based company has grown-up with the home theatre industry and is thriving in the most competitive A/V market in the world: its own back yard. It does this by employing some of the finest designers and specifiers like John Curl and Matti Otala and then manufacturing their designs to very high specifications overseas. The result is high performance "esoteric" designs available at prices most enthusiasts can afford. So if your budget won't stretch to a Lexicon, the Parasound processors are perfect.

www.bostonacoustics.com

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Primare - a clean path back to stereo

The new Primare P30 processor is ideal for all those with a foot in both music and movie camps. It shows its renowned 2-channel heritage with a completely clean by-pass mode back to stereo, which excludes all digital processing, transforming the P30 into an outstanding high-end audio pre-amplifier. Many processors have 2-channel modes, but there's usually a chip in there somewhere. This is an anathema to purists. All inputs can be configured via on-screen menus and they are factory-set in a configuration that will satisfy most users. The P30 provides balanced analogue audio inputs/outputs and digital audio inputs in addition to 7 analogue inputs, 6 digital audio inputs, and five video inputs: 2 composite, 3 S-video. Record outputs include 2 analogue, 1 Coax, 1 Toslink, 2 Composite and 2 S-video, and there's an auto-calibration facility for those averse to twiddling.

and now the power

It's a fact: When choosing a power amplifier, look for the current delivery specifications as these are as important as counting watts when it comes to driving transients through real-world loudspeaker systems rather than lab analysers. For sheer grunt, Parasound's THX certified multi-channel power amplifiers are hard to beat. Massive mains transformers and output devices mean these juggernauts have the current muscle to drive the most troublesome loudspeaker loads. This means that clean power is on hand to effortlessly deliver you into the heart of the action.

Perfect partners: Try the Primare V20 DVD player with the Lexicon MC-1, Parasound HCA2205 and HCA1500 amplifiers with NHT VT 2.4 and VS2A loudspeakers with a REL Stadium III sub-bass system.

and the Primare A 30.5

Each independent amplifier in the Primare 30.5 has a dedicated power transformer and power supply and the entire design focuses on stability and channel separation. Not so much grunt, more poise and fidelity, the A30.5 provides five channels of high quality amplification, developing 120W per channel into 8 ohms. Definitely one for the dts music aficionado.

to the loudspeakers

It's a fact: After the video screen, the loudspeaker system is predominantly the most visible component in an AV system, so the choice is critical. Unless all speakers are identical they will not sound identical, breaking the audio illusion being created. If possible match all speakers, if this is not possible, look for identical driver arrays.

A CSE dealer/installer can help you select the optimum loudspeakers for your system, room, application and aesthetic. After all there's enough to choose from. CSE's portfolio has several brands of loudspeakers, all with specialist niches.

solutions from Boston

This US loudspeaker manufacturer offers an enormous range, which means there's a Boston loudspeaker for every application, space, budget and taste. From the deliciously compact, high performance VR-M series, to the acclaimed but minute micro satellites, to entire Dolby Digital systems in a box, to the sublime Voyager all weather loudspeakers and a range of 10 flush mounting architectural loudspeakers: all the product of decades of experience in engineering high quality loudspeaker designs. Each Boston loudspeaker is guaranteed for five years.

Take the Boston Micro Series loudspeakers. There are dozens of "mini" satellite systems on the market. But none of them offer the powerful bass, smooth response and impeccable engineering of the Boston Micro Reference systems. Three Micro Reference Systems deliver no-compromise performance with virtually unlimited placement flexibility. System10k consists of five exquisitely sculpted Micro 100x speakers. System9000 includes two hefty die-cast aluminum Micro90x satellites, the mighty Micro90pv 75-watt powered subwoofer, and the die-cast aluminum Micro90c centre channel. System8000 features two Micro80x satellites, a Micro80c centre channel, with the same drivers as the 80x satellites, two Micro80e surrounds and a 65-watt powered sub. All three systems are perfect for digital soundtracks or wide-spectrum music, and their compact size and beautifully engineered designs will provide years of high quality performance. The Micro 90c, 80c, 100x, 90x and 80x satellites are available separately, to let you and your CSE dealer custom design a system for your listening room.

www.csesolutions.co.uk **www.genelec.com** www.lexicon.com **www.libertycable.com** www.livingcontrol.com

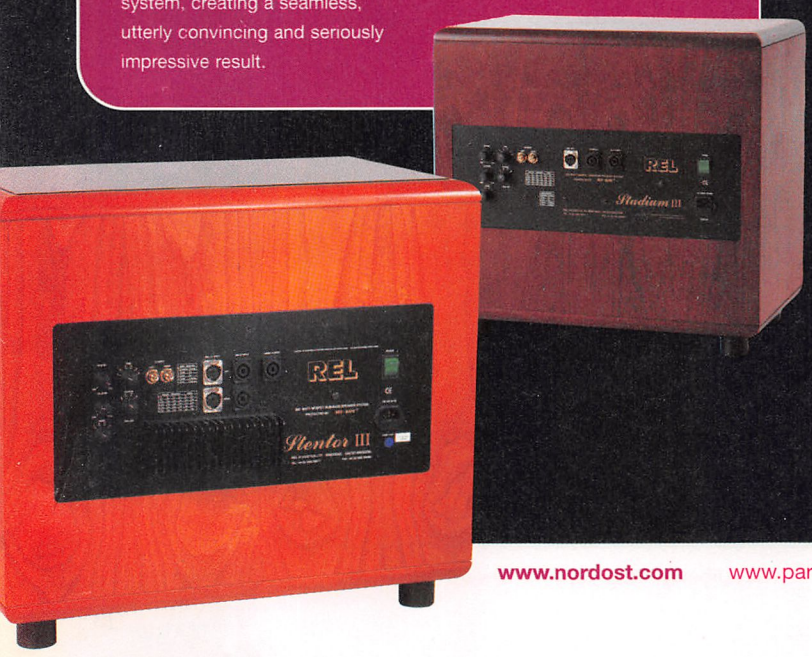
objects of desire

the bass meisters

REL, is the name on the world's most acclaimed range of sub-bass systems. The Q range of designs is A/V leaning, the ST range is music leaning, but both cross over very effectively. New stars are the Q400E, the Stentor III and Stadium III.

The new REL Q400E is the ultimate ultra-compact sub-bass system. Smaller than the award-winning compact Q100E design, the Q400E bass engine packs an awesome punch with an extraordinary 12" (300mm) long-throw, steel chassis driver, and a 400W DC-coupled MOSFET amplifier. The Stadium III moves the Stadium II system up a gear with a wholly redesigned cabinet, amplifier, driver and crossover electronics. The new Stentor III employs 50% more power than its forbear, with a 300 W fully discrete amplifier to control precisely a proprietary new very heavy duty, long throw, 10" "Volt" driver.

All REL sub-bass systems provide a choice of inputs and a scale and level of adjustment that is without equal. Not only do RELs provide better quality and more prodigious bass than competing designs, they also offer the means to precisely match their performance to your system, creating a seamless, utterly convincing and seriously impressive result.



picture this

US manufacturer Acoustic Research, has been making loudspeakers since 1954. It invented the sealed enclosure "infinite baffle" loudspeaker design widely used today.

Its latest innovation is a breakthrough in loudspeaker design called the Phantom range of super-slim loudspeakers. With the arrival of plasma TVs and projection screens, consumers are demanding a high performance loudspeaker, which complements their profile. AR has pioneered the use of ultra-flat drive units to create a loudspeaker that handles the entire frequency spectrum but is ostensibly a panel, which can be hung on the wall like a painting or used with its own slim-profile stand.

hearing is believing

High performance at affordable prices is NHT's principle goal. Since 1986, NHT has challenged the notion that the very best sound must come at a premium price.

The key to NHT's success is smart design inside and out. Not only does NHT go to great lengths to put the cost where it does the most sonic good, but also to wrap the acoustic design in beautiful boxes. NHT has pioneered the use of slim, low profile baffles and lacquer finishes to turn a high performance loudspeaker into a work of art. The range includes floor and stand mounting speakers, subwoofers, all-weather speakers and paintable architectural designs.

Centre/surround speakers all use an identical driver array for tonal matching.

www.nordost.com www.parasound.com **www.primare.com**

www.csesolutions.co.uk

CSE solutions

the active alternative

Since 1978 Genelec has been supplying the World's most discriminating audience with award-winning reference monitors. Many of the World's top producers and sound engineers trust Genelec loudspeaker technology to provide consistently high standards of performance and reliability. Genelec's reference monitors are to be found in the most prestigious recording and mixing facilities. In fact the Studio Sound World Report* revealed that Genelec is the most widely used brand of large studio monitor in the World. In the UK, major studios such as UK Metropolis, Town House, Olympic, Spike Stent (Bjork, Oasis, Massive Attack), Steel Works, HelisCentric, Ridge Farm, Nellie Hooper, Terry Brittan, Sky Fidelity (Sisters of Mercy), Ford Lane, Unit 21, Mike Stock (LightHouse Family), Roundhouse etc use Genelec active reference monitors.

Genelec specialises in active monitors, which have the amplifiers already on board, so you don't need to purchase a hefty multi-channel power amplifier. The Genelec HT205, HT206 and HT208 active monitors let you listen to movies the way sound engineers do. You can't get closer to the sound of the original mix. With Genelec, you can have the best of all worlds: a professional reference monitor for playback, a compact design which is easy to integrate with room décor, the removal of bulky, expensive external power amplifiers from the replay chain, and an impressively cinematic, highly transient sound with pin-point imaging

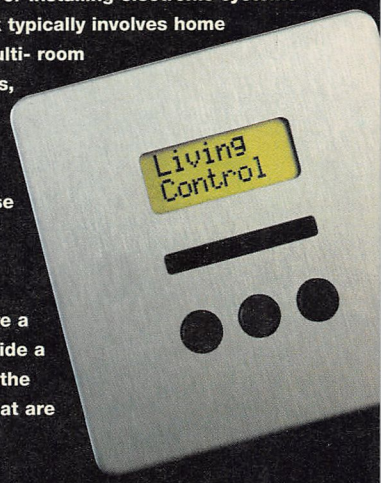
Perfect partners: Try the Primare V20 DVD player with the Lexicon DC-2 and Genelec HT205 monitors with a REL Q400E sub-bass system.

and multi-room

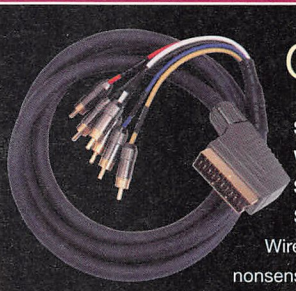
A full range of multi-room audio and video products is available from the CSE product portfolio including the Living Control "Event" 6 zone, 6 source controller, Xantech connection products and architectural loudspeakers from Boston and Speakercraft.

CSE is a member of CEDIA, the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association. CEDIA is an international trade association of companies that specialise in planning or installing electronic systems for the home. Its work typically involves home cinema, single and multi- room entertainment systems, home automation and communications systems plus integrated whole house systems providing control of lighting, security etc.

CEDIA members share a common aim - to provide a complete solution for the client with systems that are fun and easy to use.



cable stories



Straight Wire Scarts

Straight Wire's no-nonsense approach to design is seen as a welcome alternative to the "black-art" idiom commonly associated with cable marketing. Use of high quality materials combined with precision engineering and manufacturing has now produced a range of high performance SCART cables. Other SCART cables may look racy but pay lip service to the objective of delivering pure signal through low-loss architecture. Eschewing the standard approach of terminating the basic 21-core SCART cable, Straight Wire's range of four SCART to RCA cables is purpose-built for each application using individually screened conductors constructed from pure oxygen-free copper. The new range consists of SCART to SCART, SCART to 3 RCA, SCART to 4 RCA, SCART to 6 RCA and SCART to 2RCA plus S-Video in 1.5m, 3m and 5m lengths.

and Nordost...

Most cables transmit signal at between 55% and 70% the speed of light (in a vacuum). The slowest Nordost cable allows signal to be transmitted at 85% the speed of light, the fastest being close to 96% (approximately 1.06 nano seconds per metre!), this means that the signal spends less time in the cable and therefore the dielectric has less time to impart it's 'signature' on the signal. Which means signal, less system colouration. The Nord Optix S Video lead will deliver excellent re even on runs of 10 metres plus.

and Liberty...

The Liberty range of cables is specially developed for custom installation applicatio Liberty offers six direct-burial cables, an extensive range of in-wall line-level cables THX approved audio and video cables.

www.rel.net **www.speakercraft.com** www.straightwire.com www.xantech.com

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Our Awards Speak for Themselves.

With four branches covering London and the South East, twelve luxurious demonstration suites, a dedicated installation team, 0% finance and 100% service, if you're thinking of buying Hi-Fi or Audio Visual, make sure you visit Musical Images first.

e-mail: sales@musical-images.co.uk

MUSICAL IMAGES

*Interest free credit available only on purchaces over £200.

CEDIA

* 0% APR subject to status. Ask for written details. E&OE. Not valid with any other promotions or offers.

Hi SPEK electronics

SONY

AUTHORISED DEALER

DCTRTRV11
Digital Handycam

£CALL

- 2.5" LCD monitor (184k)
- Progressive shutter system
- Memory stick / PC application accessory supplied • Memory stick (4 Mb), serial cable, picture gear 4.1 lite

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £119
5 year - £189

DCRPC5
Digital Handycam

- 200k 2.5" LCD monitor • 180k precision CVF
- Super steady shot • CZ lens • 40x digital zoom
- Memory stick / PC application accessory supplied • Memory stick (4 Mb), serial cable, picture gear 4.1 lite

£CALL

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £149
5 year - £219

DIGITAL CAMERAS

Code	Price
MVCFD85	£476
DSCS50	£476
DSCS70	£649
DSCF505	£649

CAMCORDER

SLVSE800
Nicam Video

£191

- 4 Head
- Smart dial timer
- SAT synchro record
- Click jog / shuttle
- Audio dubbing

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £65
5 year - £109

Available in Black or Silver

NICAM VIDEOS

Code	Price
SLVSE700	£167
SLVSE700S	£167
SLVSF99	£334
SLVSF90W	£299

SLVSF900
Smartfile Video

£250

- New FQ silver design
- 4 Head nicam
- Smartfile and improved smart link
- SAT synchro recording

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £65
5 year - £109

VIDEO

CAMCORDERS

Code	Price
CCDTRV48	£CALL
CCDTRV57	£CALL
CCDTRV67	£CALL
CCDTRV87 *	£CALL
CCDTR427	£CALL
CCDTR717	£CALL
CCDTR918 *	£CALL
DCRTR8000 *	£CALL
DCRTRV120 *	£CALL
DCRTRV320 *	£CALL
DCRTRV620 *	£CALL
DCRTRV820 *	£CALL
DCRPC4	£CALL
DCRPC100	£CALL
DCRPC110	£CALL
DCRTRV6	£CALL
DCRTRV11	£CALL
DCRTRV20	£CALL
DCRTR510	£CALL
DCRVX1000	£1599
DCRVX2000	£CALL
DCRVX9000	£CALL

LASERLINK ACCESSORY OFFER

LASERLINK UNIT
• LITHIUM-ION BATTERY (NPF330)
• CARRY CASE
• Hi8 TAPE
ALL THIS ONLY £59 WHEN PURCHASED WITH A CAMCORDER
Offer applies to models marked *

MEMORY STICK Accessories

Code	Price
MSA4A	£19
MSA8A	£25
MSA16A	£44
MSA32A	£64
MSA64A	£89
MSACFD1B	£49
MSACFD2	£69
MSACPC2	£59
MSACPR1	£59
VMCIL4415	£29
MSAKPC4A	£89

ACCESSORIES - Camcorders

Code	Price
NPF550	£54
NPF750	£89
NPF960	£119
NPFS11	£59
NPFS21	£89
NPFS31	£119
NPFM50	£59
NPFM70	£89
NPFM91	£119
IFTR20	£69
ACCDHL	£79

EDITING/DIGITAL

Code	Price
SLVE1000	£576
SLVT2000	£658
GVA500	£649
GVD300	£961
GVD900	£1421
EVC400	£315
EVC2000	£599
DHR1000	£1799

Cabinet included

FREE DVD'S WHEN PURCHASING SELECTED TV/DVD PACKAGES
See page 4 of this advert for more details

KV32FQ75
32" Widescreen TV

- Art couture design
- 76cm visible horizontally and vertically flat screen
- FD trinitron wega
- Advanced 100Hz digital plus

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £109 5 year - £159

£CALL

TELEVISIONS

Code	Price
KV14LT1	£183
KV14V5	£275
KV14FV1	£309
KV21FV1	£391
KV21X5S ✔	£250
KV25X5S ✔	£317
KV29X5S ✔	£401
KV24WX1S ✔	£459
KV28FX20 ✔	£667
KV32FX20 +	£899
KV28FX60 +	£CALL
KV32FX60 +	£CALL
KV28FS20 ✔	£750
KV36FS70 +	£CALL
KV28DX20 ✔	£CALL
KV32DX20 ✔	£CALL
KV28DS20 ✔	£CALL
KV32DS20 ✔	£CALL
KV28DS60 +	£CALL
KV32DS60 +	£CALL
KV28FC60 ✔	£CALL
KV32FC60 ✔	£CALL
KV28FQ75 ✔	£CALL
KP41S4	£999
KP41S5	£CALL
KP41DS1	£CALL
KP48PS1	£CALL
KP53PS1	£CALL
KP61PS1	£CALL
KL50W2	£2575

+ = Cabinet optional
✔ = Cabinet/stand supplied

KF50SX100(s)
GRAND WEGA

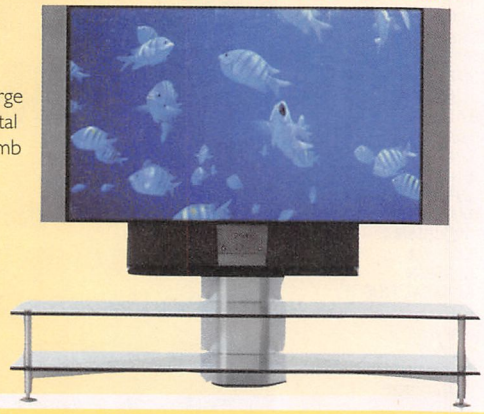
THE LAUNCH OF THE GRAND WEGA!!

- 120cm widescreen rear projection tv
- The ultimate in slimline, large screen, TV technology• Digital constant image • Digital comb filter• Auto noise reduction
- Multi zoom modes

£CALL

TV

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £219
5 year - £299



STRDB940
AV Receiver

- QS range dolby digital receiver
- Available in black & silver

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £55
5 year - £89

£CALL

HOME CINEMA

Code	Price
RMAV2000T	£120
STRDE445	£185
STRDB930	£339
TAN9000E	£499
TAE9000E	£599

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £55
5 year - £89

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

HTK-315
Full dolby digital home theatre kit

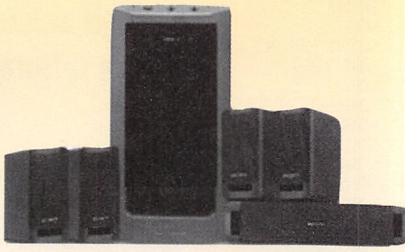
£CALL

pascal

SAVE705
Prologic Speaker Package

£399

- Comprising 5 satellite speakers and active subwoofer



HOME CINEMA

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11am - 5pm SUNDAY

FREE NATIONWIDE DELIVERY MAIL ORDER

0% APR ON ALL PRODUCTS!!! *

HI-SPEK offer up to 36 months interest free credit on all products marked with 0% APR. We also offer up to 9 months interest free option* when purchased with an extended service plan. Minimum purchase on both schemes is £200. Just call into one of our stores with your credit/debit card together with one other form of ID such as your driving license or a utility bill. Deposit is 10% and up to £5000 credit is yours on the spot. (subject to status. Written details on request. HI-SPEK are licensed credit brokers). Its simple by mail order too just call in and we'll do the rest!

AUTHORISED DEALER

Panasonic

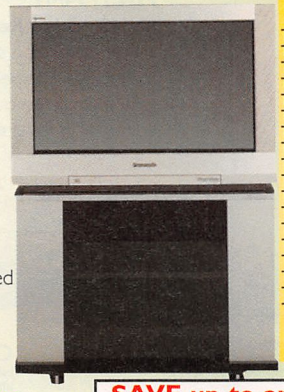
Hi SPEK electronics

TX32PK20

32" Widescreen TV

- Nicam digital stereo
- Digital management system
- Q-LINK
- AFB dome sound system
- 76cmV quintrixF wide CRT
- 100Hz super digital scan • Cabinet supplied

£CALL



TELEVISIONS		
Code		Price
TXG10		£253
TX21JT1	✔	£185
TX21CK1	✔	£190
TX14GV1		£253
TX21GV1	✔	£312
TX24DX1	✔	£CALL
TX28DK1	✔	£CALL
TX28DK2	✔	£CALL
TX28PK3	✔	£CALL
TX28PK2	✔	£CALL
TX28DT2	✔	£CALL
TX28PK10	✔	£CALL
TX32DK1	✔	£CALL
TX32DK2	✔	£CALL
TX32PK1	✔	£CALL
TX32PK2	✔	£CALL
TX32DT2	✔	£CALL
TX36PF10	✔	£CALL

✔ = Cabinet/stands supplied

TV

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £109
5 year - £159

SAVE up to an additional £65!!

Simply buy a qualifying TV with either a Panasonic VCR or qualifying DVD player.
Ask for additional discount when ordering.
Offer ends 30/11/00

£CALL

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £79, 5 year - £129

NVFJ760S - Nicam Video

• SAT control for a wide range of analogue satellite receivers • Tape library system with sorting\function and demo mode • Edit features: one touch edit with control lanc, jog and shuttle, Audio dub and insert edit, front AV inputs

10 FREE VIDEO TAPES!!
When you purchase either the NVFJ710S or the NVFJ760S
(Order code - Panasonic E180XPAL)
Whilst stock last

VIDEO

VIDEOS	
Code	Price
NVFJ610B	£CALL
NVFJ610S	£CALL
NVFJ615S	£CALL
NVFJ710S	£CALL
NVHS850S	£CALL
NVHS860S	£CALL
NVHD950B	£CALL

NVDS15

DV Camcorder

- x20 optical zoom
- Zoom microphone
- Motion sensor
- 0 lux nightview
- Playback digital effects
- Accessory shoe
- DV out
- Digital still picture
- 2.5" LCD screen

CAMCORDERS	
Code	Price
NVRZ1B	£295
NVVZ1B	£379
NVDS11 *	£632
NVDS12 *	£CALL
NVDS25 *	£CALL
NVDS35 *	£CALL
NVDS99	£295
NVDS55 *	£CALL
NVDS150 *	£CALL
NVDX110	£1099

* Supplied with free pc kit whilst stocks last

£599

+ FREE PC KIT.

While stocks last

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £119 5 year - £189

CAMCORDER

TC42PD1

Panasonic's plasma display is a fundamental revolution in viewing technology, operating on principles similar to those of a fluorescent light. A most natural picture is provided free from distortion.

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
5 year - £CALL

BEST BUY What Video & TV

£6499

PLASMA

PLASMA	
Code	Price
TC37PD1	£5199

This entire unit weighs just 36kg and at a slender 8.9cm is ideal for wall!! hanging (TC42PD1)

AUTHORISED DEALER

PHILIPS

Inc cabinet

Matching TV +VCR optional

12 months Manufacturers Warranty 3 year - £109 5 year - £159

32PW9536

32" high gloss crystal green design line

- Blackline-s real flat tube
- Digital crystalclear
- Digital natural motion
- Active control + light sensor

Crystal Clear Video · active control · Wide Screen plus · Digital 100Hz Scan

£CALL

TELEVISIONS	
Code	Price
14PT1563S	£CALL
14PT1563B	£CALL
14PT1563C	£CALL
14PT2665	£CALL
14PT3685	£CALL
21PT4475 inc stand	£CALL
25PT4775 inc stand	£CALL
28PT4775 inc stand	£CALL
21PT5505 inc stand	£CALL
24PW6005 +	£CALL
28PW6305 +	£CALL
32PW6305 +	£CALL
28PW6315 ✔	£CALL
32PW6315 ✔	£CALL
28PW6515 ✔	£CALL
32PW6515 ✔	£CALL
28PW9616 +	£CALL
28PW9525 +	£CALL
32PW9525 +	£CALL
36PW9525 +	£CALL
32PW9523 ✔	£CALL
32PW9534 ✔	£CALL
32PW9535 ✔	£CALL
28PW9535 ✔	£CALL
28PW9536 ✔	£CALL
32PW9544 ✔	£CALL
32PW9545 ✔	£CALL
28PW9545 ✔	£CALL
32PW9546 ✔	£CALL
28DW6734 +	£CALL
32DW6834 +	£CALL

+ = Cabinet optional
✔ = Cabinet supplied

32PW9616

32" Home cinema Widescreen TV

- Blackline-S real flat tube
- Digital Crystalclear, Digital natural motion
- Dolby digital 5.1

Matching TV +VCR optional

active control · Home Cinema · Crystal Clear Video · Dolby Digital · Blackline

TV

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £109 5 year - £159

£CALL

14PT3685 - 14" TV

- Black HiBri tube
- Nicam stereo sound
- Plug & play • Back lit analogue clock • FM radio • Snooze feature

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £29 5 year - £59

COMBI'S	
Code	Price
14PV200	£169
14PV330	£215
14PV334	£215

TV

£179

VR1000

SVHS Video

- SVHS with digital noise reduction, Smart picture, times base corrector and jog & shuttle • 6H hifi stereo
- Crystalclear video • NTSC playback

VIDEO	
Code	Price
VR510	£124
VR607	£139
VR608	£140
VR708	£234
VR765	£195
VR805	£189
VR806	£199
VR20D	£899

VIDEO

£245

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £79
5 year - £129

42PF9952

Plasma Monitor

- 100Hz Digital scan
- Digital comb filter
- Digital noise reduction
- Dual screen (picture + text)

PROJECTION	
Code	Price
46PP9501	£1749

£5799

12 months Manufacturers Warranty

PLASMA & PROJECTION

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EXTENDED GUARANTEES!!!

We have joined forces with Pinnacle Insurance Plc, who are specialists in this field, to bring you a highly competitive and fully comprehensive extended service option. This service plan offers absolute peace of mind against breakdown or accidental damage. All products we sell come with a one years manufacturers guarantee, which covers parts and labour. Investing in one of our service plans, will provide you with the following additional benefits immediately: • Protection against breakdown for 3 or 5 years • Protection against accidental damage from day one •On-site cover included from day one (Manufacturer warranty only return to base) • New for old replacement if beyond economical repair • No claims to submit and no bills to pay • Ask for our superb prices on this valuable "peace of mind" cover.

HI SPEK electronics

JVC

AUTHORISED DEALER

HRS6700
SVHS Video Recorder
- High res super VHS, plus super VHS ET recording
- Hifi VHS stereo with nicam • T-V link • Auto set

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £65 5 year - £109

£229

HRS7700E
SVHS Video Recorder
- High resolution super VHS • Digi picture technology • Super VHS ET recording
- Hi-fi VHS stereo with NICAM • Insert editing with flying erase head

12 months Manufacturers Warranty 3 year - £79 5 year - £129

£249

GRDVL107
- High quality picture and sound with DV format and PCM digital audio
- 800,000-pixel high resolution CCD • DV input/output terminal
- Digital still output • High res 2.5" amorphous silicon LCD monitor • 100x digital zoom
- Supplied with PC kit

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £89
5 year - £149

£CALL

HRS9700
Super VHS Hi-fi Nicam stereo VCR
- Digital wide TBC (time base corrector)
- Pro style editing • T-V link
- Easy recording + playback

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £99
5 year - £146

£409

VIDEO

VIDEO	
Code	Price
HRJ670	£133
HRJ870	£CALL
HRS7600	£199
HRS8700	£299
HRS7722	£364
HMD10000	£799
HRDVS1	£899

GR-DVX10
- 576 lines vertical resolution with 1/4" 800,000-pixel progressive scan CCD
- 520 lines horizontal resolution with high-band processor • High quality picture and sound with DV format and PCM audio • DV/analogue input

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £119
5 year - £189

£998

CAMCORDER

CAMCORDERS	
Code	Price
GRFX11EK	£299
GRDVL100	£CALL
GRDVL108	£CALL
GRDVL300	£CALL
GRDV9200	£CALL
GRDV9600	£749
GRDV9700	£CALL
GRDV9800	£CALL
GRDVX4	£719
GRDVX8	£CALL
GRDVX9	£899
GRDVX98U	£CALL

AV32WL1
Widescreen TV
- 32" natural flat 16:9 screen
- 100Hz digiPure
- BBE sound system
- T-V link capability
- Autoset
- Auto panoramic

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £109
5 year - £159

£CALL

TV

TELEVISIONS	
Code	Price
AV32WFLIEK	£1336
AV32WFP1	£1215
AV32WFR1	£799
AV28WFT1	£527
AV24WT2	£341

All include cabinets

TOSHIBA

AUTHORISED DEALER

FREE CABINET & FRONT EXTENSION SPEAKERS

WE CARRY HUGE STOCKS OF ALL PROJECTION'S IN OUR MASSIVE WAREHOUSE!

SAVE £200

ALL THIS INCLUDED IN PRICE!
- ✔ NATIONWIDE DELIVERY
- ✔ 5 YEAR GUARANTEE
- ✔ 0% APR CREDIT OPTION
- ✔ SUPPLIED WITH REAR SURROUND SPEAKERS

40WH08B
- Anti reflective panel
- 100Hz DFS
- Digital comb filter
- Dolby digital sound
- Audio output 50w
- Bass boost
- 3 scart inputs
- Auto set-up

£1649

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £189 5 year - £269

ALL THE MODELS LISTED BELOW ALSO INCLUDE • DELIVERY • 5 YR GUARANTEE • 0% APR OPTION • REAR SURROUND SPEAKERS

43PJ93B ✔	£1299
40PW03B ✔	£1399
40WH08B ✔	£1299
46WH08B	£2049
56WH09B	£2849
50PJ98B	£1949
61PJ98B	£2699

✔= FREE Cabinet + front extension speakers included

PROJECTION

DOLBY DIGITAL

32ZD08B
Widescreen TV
- Widescreen flat face TV
- 100Hz DFS
- Digital comb filter
- Dolby digital sound
- Audio output - 63W RMS
- Auto set-up
- 3 SCART inputs
- NTSC (50Hz & 60Hz) 3.58/4.43MHz

TELEVISIONS	
Code	Price
28W93B	£CALL
2987DB	£CALL
28WD98B	£CALL
32WD98B, inc cabinet	£949
28WT98B	£CALL
32WT98B	£CALL
28ZD06B	£CALL

All TV's available with optional cabinet

TV

12 months Manufacturers Warranty 3 year - £109 5 year - £159

£CALL

V860B
Nicam Video
- Picture enhancing DNR
- Auto set up
- Scart lead included
- Front A/V inputs • Insert edit

£224

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £65
5 year - £109

VIDEO

VIDEO	
Code	Price
V720	£149
V730	£166
V830	£190

MAIL ORDER - 01727 791133
FREE DELIVERY MAIL ORDER

LINES OPEN 9am - 6pm MON - SAT
11am - 5pm SUNDAY

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Call 01727 791133 to order, quoting your credit/debit card details. We deliver anywhere on the UK mainland within 48 hrs. We can also deliver within 24 hours where this is requested. We use one of the UK's leading ISO9002 approved carriers to deliver promptly and efficiently. Our warehouse staff pick and pack your orders with pride. Each order is carefully checked and packed using the most robust materials ready for despatch. Delivery is free we do not charge for packing. Please note that all deliveries are subject to availability and rates refer to the UK Mainland. For 24 hour delivery some areas will not be covered EG. Scottish Highlands. Part of the HI-SPEK group send cheques & postal orders to: 8 Acrewood way, Hatfield Rd, ST. Albans, Herts ,AL4 0JY. Prices valid until 6/12/00. Omissions and errors excepted. HI-SPEK cannot accept any responsibility for any printing errors.

All orders placed with HI-SPEK electronics are subject to our terms and conditions of sale, copies of which are available on request.

MULTI REGION DVD CENTRE

SONY

AUTHORISED DEALER

£465

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £79 5 year - £139

MULTI-REGION

DVPS735
DVD Player

- Entry DVD player
- 10 Bit DAC/96kHz, 24 bit audio DAC
- Advanced smooth scan • Click jog shuttle on front panel
- Component video output

£289

DVP335 as 336 but in black £289

DVP336
DVD Player

MULTI-REGION

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £69 5 year - £119

- Entry DVD player
- 10 bit video DAC/96kHz, 24 bit audio DAC • Advanced smooth scan • DTS stream output • CD, DVD text

3 FREE DVD TITLES!!

Claim via redemption 3 DVD titles when you purchase any Sony DVD player. An additional 2 titles can also be claimed FREE when purchasing a CTV or AV receiver at the same time as purchasing a DVD player. Ask in store for details Offer ends 31st January 2001

Other SONY models in stock

	REGION 2	MULTI-REGION
DAVS300	£CALL	£CALL
DVPS335	£250	£289
DVPS336	£250	£289
DVPS536	£309	£359
DVPS535	£309	£359
DVPS725 white		£529
DVPS725 black or silver		£449
DVPS735	£417	£465
DVPCX850	£542	£599
DVPS7700	£599	£699
DVPFX1	£1112	
DVPF11	£384	

TOSHIBA

AUTHORISED DEALER

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & SAT

SD100

£239

MULTI-REGION

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £69 5 year - £119

SD3109

£299

MULTI-REGION

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £69 5 year - £119

DIGITAL dts SURROUND DOLBY DIGITAL

SD9000

£449

MULTI REGION

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £79 5 year - £139

Other TOSHIBA models in stock

	REGION 2	MULTI-REGION
SD200	£379	£CALL

MARANTZ

AUTHORISED DEALER

DV7000 - Multi-region

£599

YAMAHA

AUTHORISED DEALER

DVDS796

£329

MULTI-REGION

DENON

AUTHORISED DEALER

DVD1500

£359

MULTI-REGION

Panasonic

AUTHORISED DEALER

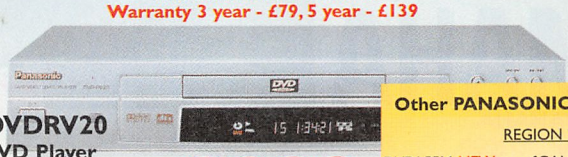
£415

MULTI-REGION

12 months Manufacturers Warranty 3 year - £79, 5 year - £139

DVDRV60
DVD Player

- 54Mhz video encoder LSI (x4 over sampling)
- Digital noise reduction/gamma correction
- Built-in decoder for dts 5.1 channel surround sound



DVDRV20
DVD Player

£288

MULTI-REGION

12 months Manufacturers Warranty 3 year - £69, 5 year - £119

- Outstanding picture and sound quality
- 2CH + bass sound
- Dialogue enhancer
- Advanced virtual surround sound
- Digital output for DTS
- Pure NTSC playback

Other PANASONIC models in stock

	REGION 2	MULTI-REGION
DVDL55M NEW	£CALL	£CALL
DVDL75M	£CALL	£CALL
DVDRV20 Blk/silver	£253	£288
DVDRV40 Silver	£295	£329
DVDRV60 Silver	£379	£415
DVDA360		£329
SCHT80	£510	£599
DVDAV7	£590	
DVDL50M		£669
DVDLV75	£1012	
DVPS55S	£416	

Pioneer

AUTHORISED DEALER

£399

DV636 - multi-region

- NTSC playback (pure or PAL-transcoded) • RGB throughotu • Integrated dolby digital and DTS decoding
- 2 S-video output's
- 2 scart sockets

NEW

MULTI-REGION

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £79
5 year - £139

NSDV55
Home cinema system

£669

MULTI-REGION

- DVD player • Tuner
- Surround processing
- Subwoofer and 5 satellite speakers, delivering 40W x 5 and 65W • Dolby digital and DTS surround sound

NEW

12 months Manufacturers Warranty
3 year - £89
5 year - £159

Other PIONEER models in stock

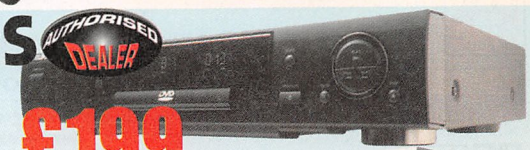
	REGION 2	MULTI-REGION
DV525		£249
DV626		£349
DV717 Black/Champagne, ex display		£299
PDVLC10 portable DVD player		£799

PHILIPS

AUTHORISED DEALER

DVD711
- multi region
+ 3 FREE DVD's

£199



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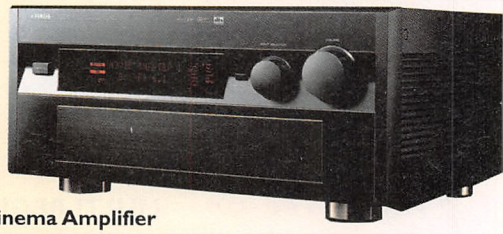

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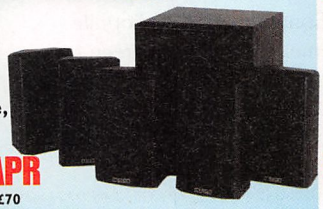

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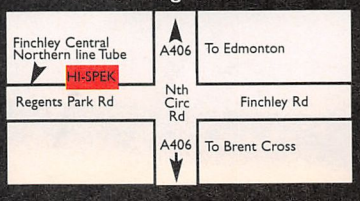

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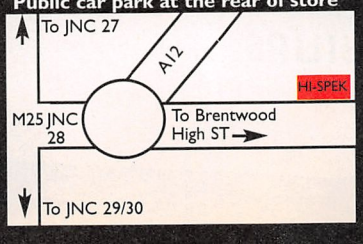

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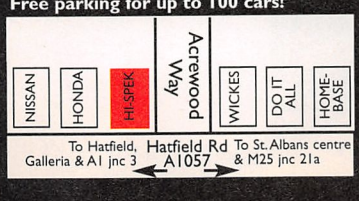

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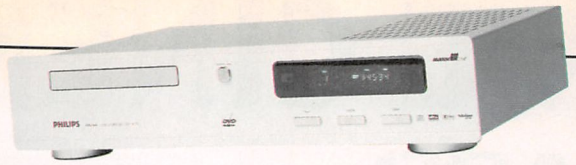


Philips' £520 DVD-960 looks like a million dollars and produces stunning sound. If only its pictures were equally pleasing. John Archer is a disappointed man

Now this is more like it. While Philips has long been at the forefront of the designer TV revolution, providing countless gorgeous sights for tired AV eyes, it has never really hit the same eye-candy highs with the rest of its AV gear. Until now. The DVD-960 is probably the most attractive DVD player we've ever seen.

DESCRIPTION

The DVD-960's gorgeously thick, sheer anodised aluminium fascia with its white-silver colouring, minimalist buttonry and perfectly smooth finish are utterly drool-worthy, to the extent that it could actually be a problem making it blend in with your other gear. Stick it with your VCR, set-top box and so on, and they're all going to look very poor relations by comparison.

But as its Matchline branding implies, Philips doesn't much care about that. This beauty is made to look its best when sat on a matching stand beneath one of Philips' designer TVs.

The premium-grade feel to the DVD-960 is enhanced by its unusual heaviness and the presence among the rear-panel connections of component video outputs. These deliver ultra-pure colour signals which really make a difference with bigscreen systems like a front- or rear-projector. The deck also sports an RGB Scart for kit lacking component video inputs.

The DVD-960 doesn't carry 5.1-channel outputs, though. Philips has deliberately not put an integrated Dolby Digital/DTS decoder into the DVD-960, since it's aiming the deck squarely at the audiophile market. Philips believes that prospective buyers will prefer to decode a pure digital stream with their own, high-grade audio components.

Continuing the audiophile theme, Philips is also keen to stress that the DVD-960 has an entirely separate audio circuit and uses the highest-performing audio digital-to-analogue conversion processing systems currently available. Blimey. The DVD-960 certainly talks the talk. But does it walk the walk?

OPERATION

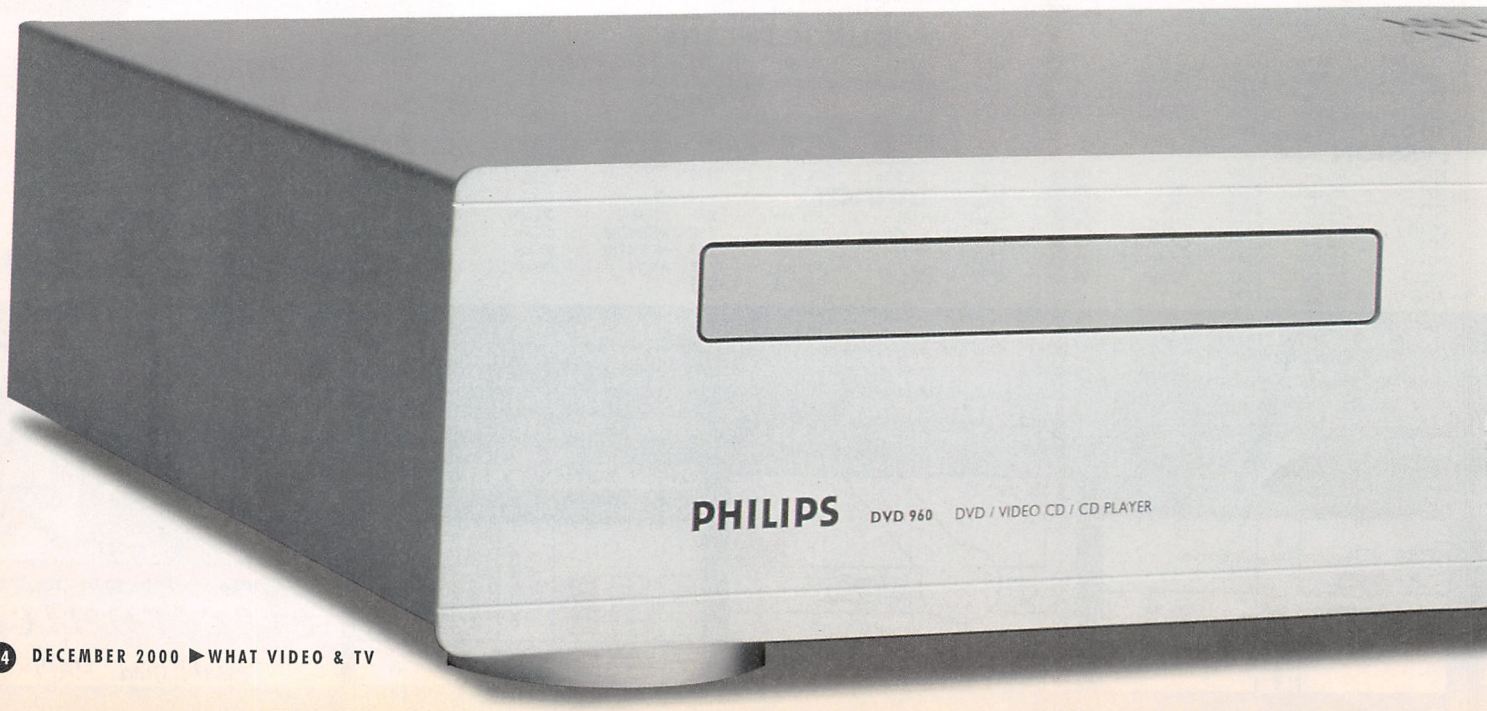
Pressing Setup on the large and hefty remote calls up a bland but very simple setup menu system. The writing used in the menus is big enough to be easily viewable on even a very small screen, and changing settings requires no tedious navigation through submenus.

Big and bold, with sensibly spaced buttons, but nasty jog/shuttle dial in the middle

The only surprise, perhaps, given the price point of the DVD-960, is that there aren't more options to play with. The only unusual feature is a video shift facility for shunting the picture right or left, if it doesn't fit comfortably in your screen when you first turn the deck on.

Even during playback there are precious few extra goodies to report. The DVD-960 plays NTSC discs in their pure form, which is good news for people with NTSC-capable TVs. Those with non-NTSC sets should use the RGB output.

There's a fairly useful Scan mode, which plays the first few seconds of each chapter on a disc, and a horribly fiddly jog/shuttle dial



The DVD-960 outputs most domestic video formats, including RGB and component

system on the remote. This allows you two speeds of slo mo, three speeds of picture search, and the facility to advance a frame at a time at the speed you rotate the inner wheel on the remote's dial. We'd prefer picture advance/ rewind buttons any day.

PERFORMANCE

Given how few features the DVD-960 has, even more pressure is put on its performance to justify the premium price. So it was with high hopes that we stuck in a copy of the tasty R2 pressing of *The Sixth Sense* – hopes which were, on the picture side at least, quickly dashed.

It's hard to put your finger on exactly what the picture lacks, but it doesn't match the utter sharpness and purity exhibited by some high-flying rivals. As ever with DVD, we're talking about incredibly fine levels of difference between the great and in this case the merely decent.

But when you're talking about a player costing £520, you'd expect the difference to be in a positive rather than a negative direction.

When put through our objective laboratory tests, the DVD-960's video capabilities were even poorer than our eyes had suggested they would be (see *Specifications* for details).

> **"The sound has a perfect balance of transparency and richness"**

Thankfully, the DVD-960 goes some way to justifying its price point with an audio performance which is absolutely first class. Starting out with movies, the precision of the effects placement and the almost organic unity of the overall tone is a delight, indicating a terrifically stable pickup mechanism, able to deliver the digital bitstream with a minimum of error correction along the way.

PCM CD playback is even better. The sound produced manages that perfect balance of transparency and richness which only the very best audio circuitry can muster, smoothly enlivening everything from Tindersticks to Bach and Placebo. Philips' audio boasting seems justified.

CONCLUSION

Now for the tricky bit: should you actually buy the DVD-960? It completely depends on who you are. If you've already got a silver designer Philips TV and fancy the matching – and gorgeous in their own right – aesthetics, then the slight weaknesses in the picture should not deter you.

Equally, if you place audio prowess above video prowess, this could be the player for you, especially since Sony's new players don't match their awesome predecessors in this department.

But if you insist on top-notch pictures and features as well as sound for this amount of money, the DVD-960 may not be for you ❐

VERDICT

Beautiful looks and stunning sonics don't balance out disappointing weaknesses in the picture at this price point

PICTURE	7/10
SOUND	10/10
FEATURES	7/10
EASE OF USE	8/10
OVERALL	8/10

SPECIFICATIONS

PHILIPS DVD-960

GUIDE PRICE £520

KEY FEATURES
Component video outputs
Pure NTSC playback
RGB output

WHAT'S GOOD
Looks; sound quality

WHAT'S BAD
Disappointing picture; price

FEATURES
DVD/CD/Video CD (with PBC)/ CD-R/CD-RW playback; DTS/ MPEG/Dolby Digital output; pure NTSC playback; multiangle support; parental controls; multi-aspect ratio support; three speeds of picture search; two-speed slo mo; repeat play; jog/shuttle control; chapter intro scan; chapter shuffle; auto favourite track selection for CD

SOCKETS
S-video out; composite video out; one Scarts (with RGB output); stereo audio output; optical/coaxial digital audio outputs; component video outputs

DIMENSIONS
430(w) x 86(h) x 275(d)mm

CONTACT
Philips ☎ 020 86656350
www.philips.com

TEST DATA
Jitter: 8ns (average)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -52.9dB (poor)
Chroma AM/PM: -65.0dB/-64.9dB (very good/very good)
Chroma crosstalk: -48.7dB (below average)
Frequency response (S-video) at 5.8MHz: -12.38dB (below average)
composite video at 5.8MHz: -12.41dB (below average)
Digital audio deviation: 286.9ps (excellent)

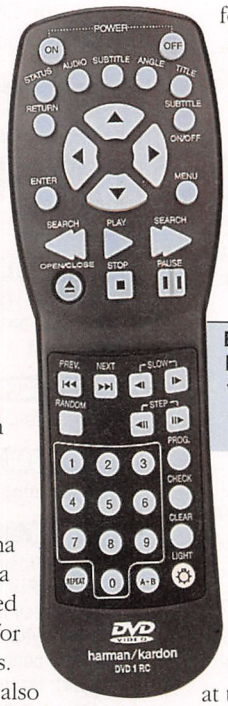
A CUT ABOVE

Harman Kardon may be new to DVD, but it's an established name in high-end audio. Max Creely finds out how its premier player, the £450 DVD 1, measures up

It's not for nothing that the V in DVD stands for 'versatile'. Perfectly good machines can be bought for as little as £150, leaving rock stars and oil magnates to drool over the likes of Tag McLaren's £4,000 DVD32R.

While most of the DVD market is carved up between established video manufacturers and OEM rebadged products from China and Korea, there's a solid niche occupied by brands known for hi-fi audio products.

All DVD players also handle CDs, so there's a reasonable crossover between markets. Usually though, there's a premium for 'audiophile' DVD decks and the DVD 1, the first player from Harman Kardon, is a case in point.



DESCRIPTION

The DVD 1 boasts striking looks. Its totally black casing reveals the audiophile background, having not succumbed to the current silver fashion, while the classy button and display design are unlike anything else on the market.

Backlit buttons and the key to multiregional playback

Socketry is traditional. We'd have expected component video outputs at this price, but sadly that's not to be. There are, however, two Scarts (one RGB), composite/S-video outputs, stereo audio outputs plus coaxial and optical digital outputs. External remote control links are also present for linking via other Harman Kardon equipment.

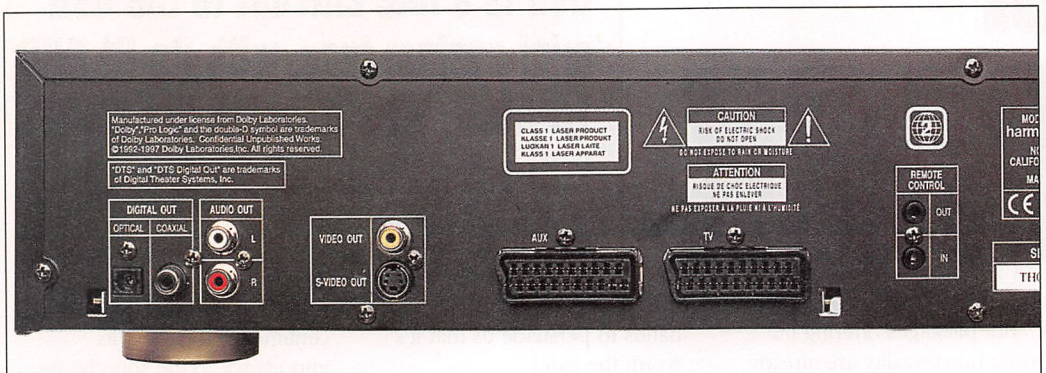
The remote control is an above-average device, with an ergonomic layout and even such frills as backlighting to prevent finger-fumbling in the dark.

OPERATION

This deck isn't exactly bursting with features, but that does mean that the setup procedure is simple. It's also beautifully presented, with attractive menu screens and a straightforward user interface.

The features which are present are par for the course for most contemporary players – no more, no less. It's reassuring to see the presence of CD-R/RW playback, while there are plenty of DVD trick-play speeds and programmable replay options.

The DVD 1's main hidden asset is an easy handset hack to play any regionally coded disc (see *Handset Hack for the DVD 1*). S-video users should note that NTSC playback is only supported through the RGB Scart.



At this price the lack of component video outputs is a disappointment

PERFORMANCE

It's rare to see a truly bad picture from a DVD player. Likewise, it's rare to see one which is head and shoulders above the rest. However, one look at our test data reveals just how good this player is, with excellent or very good ratings in all but one category.

Detail resolution is beautifully fine, colour is vivid but well controlled and there's very little video noise or colour interference worth grumbling about. Note that even the worst of our test readings – chroma crosstalk – is still rated good (this is a weak point in the majority of DVD players).

"Images are almost hypnotic in their sheer watchability"

So how does this actually work out in practice?

TVs with comb filters also render this problem largely invisible. Aesthetically too, the images produced by the DVD 1 are highly compelling and almost hypnotic in their sheer watchability.

No DVD deck worth its salt should be without great audio capabilities – especially one retailing for £450 from the likes of Harman Kardon. Suffice it to say that the DVD 1 is a sharp, exquisite audio player in terms of Dolby Digital and DTS soundtracks, and especially CD audio.

Hi-fi buffs thinking of investing in DVD can finally save space by disposing of their ageing CD deck.

CONCLUSION

Extraordinary looks, adorable user interface, attractive remote control... the DVD 1 is certainly a top-class item, hence the extra cost. But it's also satisfying to report that much of the price is matched by first-rate AV performance.

Features are light, which is a disappointment compared to, for example, Sony's DVP-S735, but for those who want no-fuss functionality and sturdy day-to-day quality, this deck is an excellent bet. And let's not forget the simple hack to swap the player from its Region 2-only shipping condition.

The DVD 1 may be a pricey proposition, but it stands out from the crowd in a number of key areas. And in these days of flexible pricing among fiercely competing retailers, you might well find it at a more agreeable price. Check it out! ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

A luxury multiregion player for audio/videophiles

PICTURE	10/10
SOUND	10/10
FEATURES	7/10
EASE OF USE	9/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

HARMAN KARDON DVD 1

GUIDE PRICE £450

KEY FEATURES
Dolby Digital/DTS compatible
CD-R/RW playback
Multiregion hack
NTSC (via RGB)
Nine bookmarks

WHAT'S GOOD
Picture; sound; looks; ease of use; handset hack

WHAT'S BAD
Pricey; light on features

FEATURES
DVD/VCD/CD/CD-R/CD-RW compatible; Dolby Digital/DTS compatible; NTSC compatible (RGB output); onscreen menus; disc/title/chapter repeat, A-B repeat; random play; CD intro scan; program play; multiangle; nine bookmarks; four scanning speeds in either direction; four slo-mo speeds; parental lock; dynamic range control

SOCKETS
Front: headphone jack
Rear: two Scarts (one RGB); stereo audio outputs (phonos); composite video output (phono); S-video output; coaxial and optical digital audio outputs; external remote jacks

DIMENSIONS
440(w) x 108(h) x 330(d)mm

CONTACT
Harman Kardon ☎ 0033243384460
www.harman-kardon.com

TEST DATA
Video jitter: 2ns (excellent)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -75.6dB (very good)
Chroma AM/PM: -70.5dB/-67.3dB (excellent/very good)
Chroma crosstalk: -56.5dB (good)
Frequency response (S-video) at 5.8MHz: -7.86dB (very good)
composite at 5.8MHz: -7.61dB (very good)
Digital audio deviation: 266.9ps (excellent)

LEADER OF THE PACK

JVC is a late entrant to the DVD mini-system fray, with its £1,000 TH-A10R. Was it worth the wait? Without a doubt, according to John Archer

JVC's TH-A10R 'DVD Digital Cinema System' arrives with the odds stacked against it. It may offer a heck of a lot to home cinema newbies: a DVD player, tuner, DTS/DD decoding, and all the speakers/ amplification you need to experience full 5.1-channel sound.

But packages offering the same functionality are already available from Sony, Panasonic and Pioneer, and all three have proven themselves to be sterling performers. What's more, all three of them sell for substantially less than the £1,000 TH-A10R. So JVC's offering has clearly got a real job on its hands to persuade us that it's worth the extra.

DESCRIPTION

The main speakers are amazingly small. The left, right, rear-left and rear-right speakers are just 9cm tall, 6cm wide and 11cm deep, with the centre speaker adding a few centimetres to reflect its importance to the soundstage. This is great news for the looks of your living room, of course – especially since they're dressed in a lovely silver finish – but is it going to be great news for the sound quality?

Such concerns grow when you haul the subwoofer out of the box. Compared with the satellite speakers it is supposed to operate with, it's a veritable colossus, making you wonder if the bass produced from such a monster could really mix well with such diddy companions.

Finally we get to the system's main control unit, containing the DVD player and an RDS/ EON-capable radio tuner. This is a highly stylised item, wearing brushed-silver livery which angles sharply in at the middle, and adorned with two dazzling blue-lit buttons at either end.

As you'd expect, the rear panel is bristling with audio and video connections, reflecting its potential status as a surround sound audio centre for all your AV gear, such as a VCR and digital set-top box. There's even a digital output for recording to

MiniDisc or CD-R. A notable absentee is a Scart socket, removing the possibility of RGB output.

OPERATION

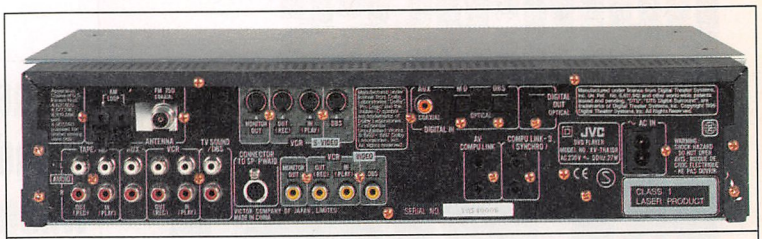
Hooking the satellite speakers up is a doddle, since all the cables are labelled with the speaker channel they should be connected to (eg 'rear left'). Then simply plug in the supplied connector cable between the sub and the DVD player unit, attach the player to your TV, and you're ready to go.

> **"The power of the minute satellite speakers is extraordinary"**

Well, nearly. Of course no DVD setup would be complete without a visit to the player's onscreen menus to set your playback preferences. And happily the menu system for the TH-A10R is every bit as attractive and friendly as that found on the most recent generation of standalone JVC DVD players.

It's all perfectly pitched for the sort of home cinema beginner such a one-stop product is aimed at. JVC has even thoughtfully included two remote controls: a complicated one for operating everything, and a simple, stripped down one for using the DVD player on a day-to-day basis.

A few rather neat tricks are available during DVD playback. Our favourite is a digest mode, which shows the opening frames from the chapters on a disc and leaves a freeze frame of each on screen, nine at a time, to help find a desired part of a film. But there's also a zoom mode, three picture presets, and a bitrate meter for tracking a disc's data transmission rate.

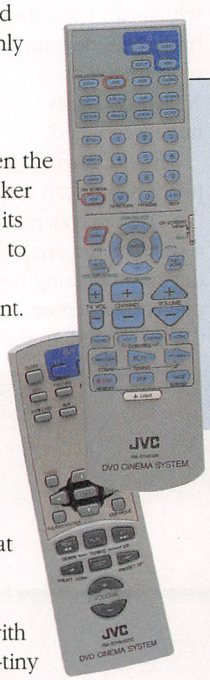


Easier than it looks to connect plus sockets to spare

PERFORMANCE

Since the TH-A10R's audio abilities are so crucial to its success, we'll check them out first. Pushing the system hard with the effects-packed and bass-heavy Dolby Digital mix from the *Men In Black* DVD, our ears were hugely impressed.

The sheer power of the minute satellite speakers is extraordinary. As well as being sharp and precise, they even handle bass reasonably well, portraying rumbustious action sequences with the sort of vigour you'd normally only find on a midrange separates system. Even the centre speaker overcomes its dimensions to sound rich and coherent.



The bigger, fuller remote remains very usable thanks to clear labelling, a sensible layout and backlighting. And the small one does a great job of focusing on the essentials. Having two in the first place is a stroke of genius

Perhaps the most astonishing success of this audio system though, is the way that mighty sub blends so perfectly with those ultra-tiny satellites. The full bass end of the audio spectrum is blended with the high and midrange without any sign of a gap.

The only negative is that the volume sweet spot is rather narrow. Go too quiet and the sound loses dynamics and detail; go a bit too high and trebles can sound harsh and tiring.

The pictures are slightly less impressive, but certainly not bad. They give reasonably bright colours, acceptable levels of detail, and seem only slightly more prone to noise than normal. It would be great if picture quality was the best ever, but that would be expecting too much for a deck containing so many secondary connections and features at this price point.

The only genuine cause for complaint is that you can't play NTSC discs in pure NTSC or quasi-PAL format, leaving you with a rather rough-looking and unstable NTSC-to-PAL image.

CONCLUSION

We said at the start that JVC would have to justify the £300 price hike over its nearest rival. And it has. Technically, the electronics inside the DVD player might not be the greatest in the world. But there's nothing on the pictures side to cause a home cinema beginner any grief at all, and the quality of the speaker system more than makes up for any deficiencies in the DVD player's audio circuitry.

The TH-A10R simply gives you the quality of a mid-priced separates system with the convenience of a one-stop package. And you can't say fairer than that ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

The most expensive of the DVD home cinema packages, but also the best

PICTURE	8/10
SOUND	9/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	9/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

JVC TH-A10R

GUIDE PRICE.....£1,000

KEY FEATURES
Integrated DTS/Dolby Digital decoding
5.1-channel speakers included
Integrated RDS tuner

WHAT'S GOOD
Speaker system; operating system

WHAT'S BAD
NTSC playback

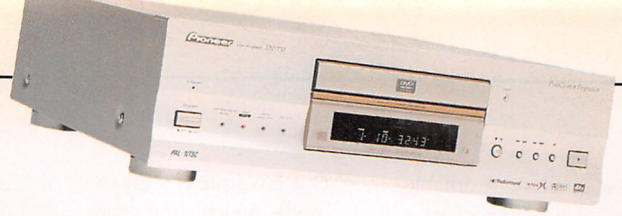
FEATURES
DVD/CD/Video CD playback (with PBC); decoded Dolby Digital/DTS/Pro-Logic/MPEG surround output; NTSC playback into PAL; multiangle support; parental controls; zoom; six DSPs; sleep timer; 100W subwoofer, 5 x 20W for satellites; A-B repeat; five/six-speed slo-mo forward/reverse; frame advance; AM/FM tuner with 45 presets; CD track intro scan/DVD chapter scan; other JVC device control; surround test tone, with speaker size/delay settings, plus sub crossover selection

SOCKETS
Two audio-only outputs; stereo audio inputs with composite and S-video; tape output; AV output; digital coaxial and two optical digital inputs; optical digital output; FM/AM antenna terminals; system terminal to subwoofer

DIMENSIONS
403(w) x 85(h) x 273(d)mm

CONTACT
JVC ☎ 020 8450 3282
www.jvc.co.uk

TEST RESULTS
Jitter: 11ns (average)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -48.3dB (below average)
Chroma AM/PM: -54.6dB/-54.6dB (below average/below average)
Chroma crosstalk: -61.8dB (good)
Frequency response (S-video) at 5.8MHz: 10.69dB (average)
composite at 5.8MHz: -10.22dB (average)
Digital audio deviation: 4,828.5ps (poor)



PROGRESS REPORT

Pioneer bucks the 'cheaper is better' trend with a DVD player that sells for a whopping £700. Steven Armstrong finds out whether it's worth it

As its name suggests, Pioneer has always been at the cutting edge of technology. And it has always aimed high, remaining firm in the belief that quality is paramount. But the DV-737 still comes as a shock. While most manufacturers are frenziedly getting their DVD players down to the £250-£300 pound mark, the DV-737 is only going to be yours if you've got a cool £700 to spare. But what makes it so special?

DESCRIPTION

From its looks alone you sense that the DV-737 is a little out of the ordinary. As well as being luxuriantly gold, it's also massive, resembling Pioneer's DV-919 LD/DVD combi we saw a year or two back. But there's definitely only one disc tray here, so the size must be down to something else – an awesomely built with a mass of discrete circuitry, perhaps?

The rear panel offers a much more immediate answer to the question of just why the DV-737 is so darned expensive. Amid a pleasantly fulsome roster of connections is a set of component video outputs, accompanied by a funny little switch labelled 525i and 525p.

> ***"Audio is pristine and dynamic"***

The component inputs in themselves are a pleasing find, as they deliver the purest colour signals possible to any devices – mostly projectors and a handful of new Toshiba TVs – able to receive them. But it's the switch which really sets the pulse racing, as it indicates that the DV-737 is the first UK DVD player to have progressive scan output.

OPERATION

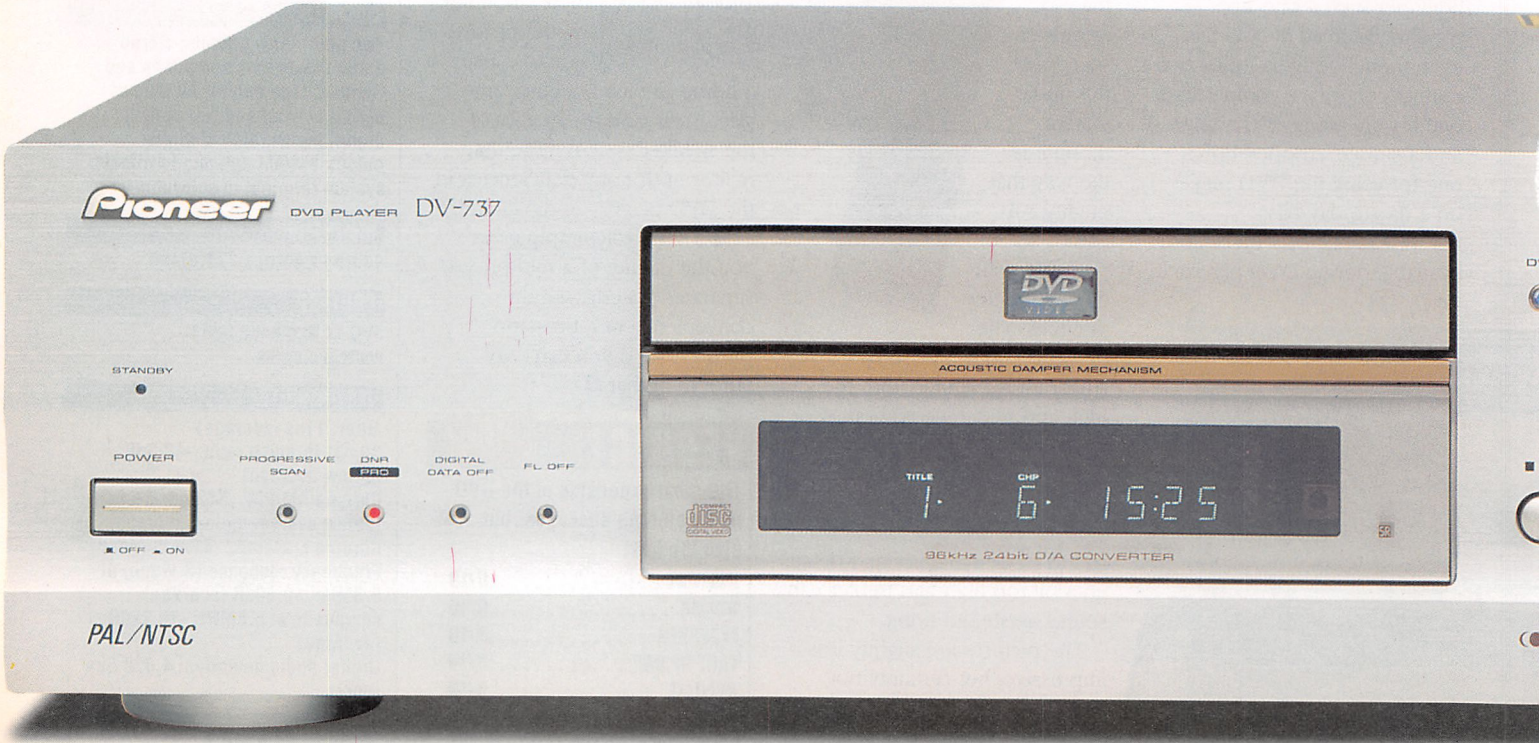
There are two main reasons for having progressive scan in a DVD player. First, the increased scanning rate the process employs means that the blank horizontal lines which can spoil the bigscreen viewing of (particularly NTSC) DVDs, is hugely reduced.

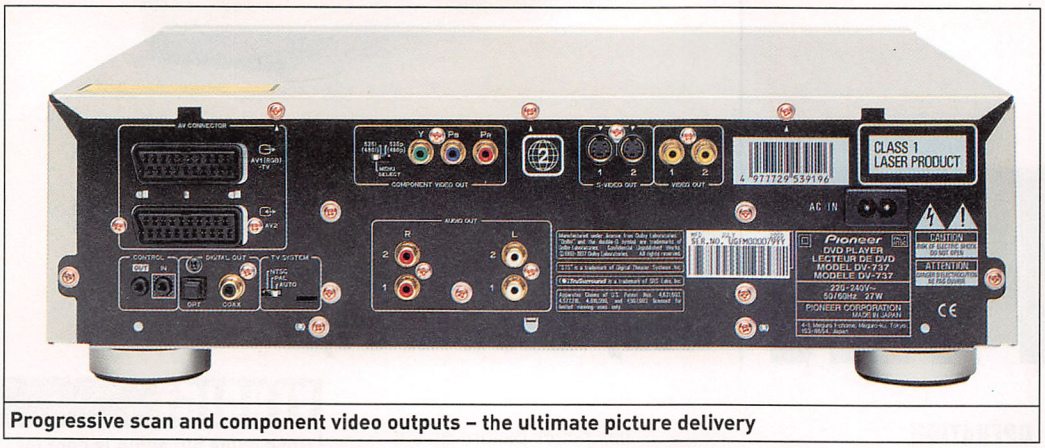
Second, having progressive scan inside the DVD player removes a stage of the analogue to digital processing between player and screen, reducing the unwanted artefacts and interference that such processing can introduce.

BUT! You can only watch the DV-737's progressive scan output on a progressive scan display that has component video inputs. Which means no UK TVs, and only a few high-end LCD projectors (including Sony's VPL-VW10HT). The rest of us will have to make do with the deck's non-progressive scan output.

Wearing a pleasing gold finish, this little beauty is also sensibly laid-out, has a backlight, and even features a jog/shuttle dial you can actually use!

In addition, the progressive scanning only works on NTSC discs, which means it will only improve the look of Japanese R2 NTSC discs or the handful of region-free US discs available. Unless, of course, you get your





Progressive scan and component video outputs – the ultimate picture delivery

player modified to handle discs from all regions.

Progressive scan isn't the only thing on the DV-737 that is pushing back the envelope, however. It also features the most flexible set of picture adjustments ever. Roughly speaking, these can be split into two categories: those which reduce noise, and those which simply adjust aspects of the picture to suit personal taste.

The noise reduction can be applied to the brightness component, the colour component, the video artefacts at the edge of an image which can result from the MPEG compression (known as Mosquito noise), and last but definitely not least, the blocks that poorly encoded discs can leave in their pictures.

For the rest, we refer you to the *Specifications* box. Suffice it to say that if we can't get pictures looking exactly as we want them, it can only be because the player has some rather fundamental problems.

PERFORMANCE

Sadly having to skip a truckload more features for time constraints, we get to the main enchilada: the performance. Does all £700 find its way onto the screen?

Amazingly, it does. Leading the way is a simply awesome ability with detail presentation, which rivals the previously matchless Toshiba players in this crucial department. This is backed up by beautifully registered colours, zero noise (we never needed those noise reduction routines, but it was still nice to know they were there!), oodles of contrast, and best of all, that almost undefinable cinematic polish that makes a good DVD player into a great one.

What's more, the DV-737 scores a vital victory over even the best of its competitors by offering enough flexibility to make bad discs look good – or at least better. And, of course, the DV-737 makes NTSC films look better on a progressive scan-compatible projector – a high-end player that really does cater for a high-end home cinema system.

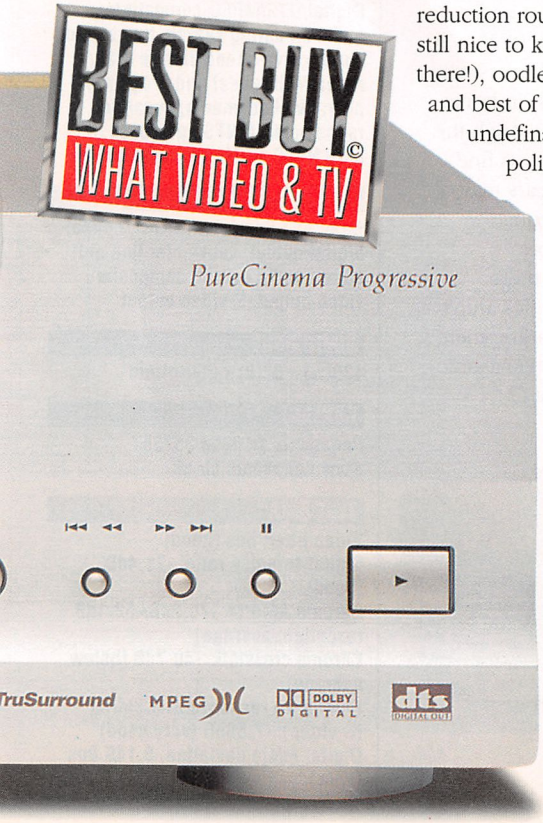
After so much visual splendour, it would be tragic if the DV-737 didn't have the audio quality to match. But inevitably, it does. *Men in Black* and *A Bug's Life* sound pristine and dynamic – traits which carry over into the more taxing arena of PCM CD playback.

The presentation of music is exceptionally forthright without becoming overblown. It would rather show off its adeptness at eking out every detail in the recording than flex its muscles for the sake of it. Rich vocal tracks are particularly rewarding.

CONCLUSION

The Pioneer DV-737 is an astoundingly accomplished player. It offers the flexibility to make pictures look exactly how you want them, is a beautifully engineered deck, and has the power to add a new picture dimension to high-end systems. All in all it sets the standard for upcoming high-end progressive scan decks from Sony and Toshiba to match.

If you haven't got a progressive scan display, £700 might seem a bit steep for a player you won't get the full benefit of, but if you want the best things in life, you just have to pay for them ❐



VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

A massive features list and a superlative performance make £700 sound reasonable

PICTURE	10/10
SOUND	9/10
FEATURES	10/10
EASE OF USE	7/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

PIONEER DV-737

GUIDE PRICE £700

KEY FEATURES

Progressive scan output
Total picture flexibility
Component video outputs
DTS/Dolby Digital audio

WHAT'S GOOD

Picture; sound; features

WHAT'S BAD

Needs a high-end projector to get full benefit from it; complicated for beginners

FEATURES

DVD/VCD/CD/CD-RW playback; Dolby Digital/DTS; repeat disc, title or chapter; repeat A-B; three scanning speeds in each direction; three slow-motion speeds; frame advance; multiangles; programme chapters; random play; five-disc restart memory; condition memory for 15 discs; parental lock; onscreen menus; dynamic range control; bitrate meter; adjustable brightness, colour, mosquito, and blocking noise reduction; presets for projectors, professional monitors and TVs; PureCinema processing; 96kHz audio; progressive scan from NTSC sources; pure NTSC or NTSC-to-PAL playback; adjustable ultra-fine/medium fine details, white and black levels, hue, chroma, and chroma delay; backlit remote; virtual surround

SOCKETS

Two Scarts; two sets of audio stereo outputs; two composite video outputs; two S-video outputs; coaxial and optical digital audio outputs; component video outputs

DIMENSIONS

420(w) x 128(h) x 370(d)

CONTACT

Pioneer ☎ 01753 789789
www.pioneer-eur.com

TEST RESULTS:

Jitter: 5ns (excellent)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -71.0dB (good)
Chroma AM/PM: -70.2dB/-60.2dB (excellent/average)
Chroma crosstalk: -43.5dB (below average)
Frequency response (S-video) at 5.8MHz: -4.5dB (excellent)
composite at 5.8MHz: -5.31dB (excellent)
Digital audio deviation: 693.5ps (very good)

DOWN THE PAN

Even the big boys are jumping on the cut-price DVD bandwagon now, hence Panasonic's £250 DVD-RV20. Max Creely takes it for a spin

DVD player prices are dropping like autumn leaves, and even entry-level decks from brands like Panasonic are appearing for £250. The DVD-RV20 is a case in point. But does it have what it takes to compete or have corners been cut?

DESCRIPTION

This bland-looking player hardly breaks the mould in terms of specifications, either. Despite sharing many specs with the midrange RV40, the RV20 has a retro VCR-like appearance (available in black or silver).

> *"No sonic superstar"*

Rear socketry is stripped to bare essentials, with one Scart (non-RGB), composite and S-video outputs, stereo out and optical digital audio output (no coaxial alternative).

One bonus is the subwoofer phono output, which will allow anyone without full 5.1-speaker systems to connect an active (self-powered) sub.

The remote control is the same as the RV40's, and is a streamlined item which is pleasing to use.

OPERATION

It's déjà vu time with the onscreen menus, which are unchanged from previous Panasonic operating systems. For new or experienced users, this is simple to set up and effective in day-to-day operation. As with the RV40, we're disappointed by the lack of RGB output (especially when sub-£200 players can manage it and some, like the Yelo 800, even add component video).

Functional but fine

Special features include NTSC playback as PAL60 (or pure NTSC), and audio sampling during x2 picture scan playback. Picture scanning has five speeds (maximum x100), as does slow motion. Up to five points in a DVD can be bookmarked for quick access later in the session (erased on eject).

Notable audio features comprise dialogue enhancement (essentially a centre-channel boost), virtual surround sound and an on/off toggle option for the subwoofer output.

PERFORMANCE

Panasonic was once top dog in the DVD field, but now Toshiba has better picture quality, Sony superior features and Hitachi more playback options (eg CD-R). So where does this leave the RV20? It's by no means a poor performer, but neither is it terribly exciting – and the audio test data reveal it is no sonic superstar.

Above-average colour, detail and contrast make its picture performance very satisfactory, despite the lack of an RGB option. However, the audio playback is far from inspiring, particularly on CD playback. The dull edge even extends to Dolby Digital and DTS.

CONCLUSION

Uninspiring to look at and not great to listen to, the RV20 will appeal to first-time buyers who are unlikely to invest in home cinema speakers. Although the player's image quality is fine and inexperienced ears may not notice the inadequate sound, there are more attractive decks out there.

Although audiophiles aren't the RV20's target market, there's really no reason for Panasonic to be so complacent ❐

VERDICT

Good value but audio is poor for a Panasonic and there's nothing really new here

PICTURE	8/10
SOUND	6/10
FEATURES	7/10
EASE OF USE	7/10
OVERALL	7/10

SPECIFICATIONS

PANASONIC DVD-RV20

GUIDE PRICE £250

KEY FEATURES
Dolby Digital and DTS output
DVD bookmarks
NTSC compatible
Subwoofer line out

WHAT'S GOOD
Value; reasonable picture

WHAT'S BAD
Disappointing sound; no RGB

FEATURES
DVD/VCD/CD playback; Dolby Digital/DTS/MPEG-compatible; audio on during search; five-speed slo mo; five-speed picture scan; repeat/A-B repeat and programme play; five bookmarks; dynamic range control; NTSC playback in pure NTSC or PAL60; parental lock

SOCKETS
Rear: one Scart (non-RGB); optical digital output; subwoofer line out; stereo audio output; composite video output; S-video output

DIMENSIONS
430(w) x 82(h) x 269(d)mm

CONTACT
Panasonic ☎ 0990 357357
www.panasonic.co.uk

TEST DATA
Video jitter: 5ns (good)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -71.4dB (good)
Chroma AM/PM: -70.2dB/-62.1dB (excellent/average)
Chroma crosstalk: -40.7dB (below average)
Frequency response at 5.8MHz (S-video): -7.58dB (very good)
Digital audio deviation: 5,149.0ps (poor)

SOGGY SONICS

We liked Samsung's DVD-511 in our last issue. But will Max Creely feel the same way about the £300 DVD-811?

In our November issue we reviewed Samsung's latest entry-level DVD player, the DVD-511. Like night follows day, so does a mid-priced player offering all the delights of the starter deck plus a few frills, all for just £80 more.

DESCRIPTION

The DVD-811's front panel is virtually identical to the DVD-511's grey aluminium fascia, but adds a shuttle dial arrangement, plus headphone socket and volume control. It's an efficient, minimal design which looks more attractive than some of the thrown-together OEM affairs we've seen.

The handset, sadly, is exactly the same as the DVD-511's, which sported minuscule buttons and poor joystick navigation.

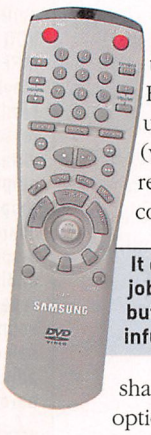
At the back of the player are a healthy number of sockets, including two Scarts (one RGB), double sets of stereo audio and composite video outputs, plus six phono sockets denoting a built-in Dolby Digital 5.1 decoder.

OPERATION

Setup and operation are virtually identical to the DVD-511 (see November issue) and previous Samsungs – joyfully simple, in other words. Extra features on the DVD-811 include CD-R/RW playback (including MP3 compatibility, a feature normally found only on Chinese imports).

There's also a full range of receiver-type setups for the surround sound decoder, such as speaker size settings, delay and test tone. To use these you'll need to route the 5.1 output via a suitable surround sound amp or series of active speakers.

There are also optical and coaxial bitstream options for DTS and external Dolby Digital decoding (although the deck takes care of the latter itself).



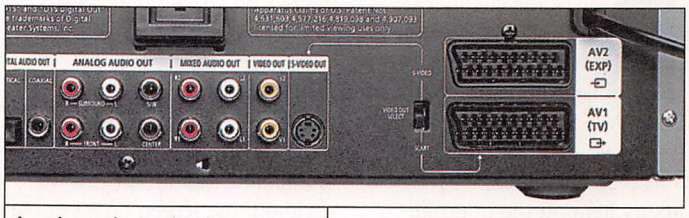
It does the job but its buttons are infuriating

For NTSC playback the deck can switch to quasi-PAL mode. However, Samsung decks used to play raw NTSC (which produces better results) or do full PAL conversions. The quasi mode is the same as a PAL 60Hz compromise, and it's a shame that the pure NTSC option has been removed.

The DVD-811 is multiregion hackable using the notorious Aiwa-type handset (see the various DVD websites for full instructions).

PERFORMANCE

We measured the DVD-511 against its predecessor and found it was a very slight improvement. In turn, the pricier DVD-811 provides an equivalent step up in quality over the DVD-511.



Ample socketry for £300

Most of the lab test readings are similar, but chroma crosstalk is better. Similarly, digital audio is not quite as bad but remains below average.

Subjectively, this is a fine player with very good colour and detail reproduction marred only by a slight lack of clarity on audio playback. At £300, better decks are available in terms of audio quality – which will be of most concern if the DVD-811 is to double as a CD player.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the DVD-811 is a smart-looking deck but offers a mixed bag in performance quality. The deck's colour and detail are impressive, but those with keen hearing may find something lacking. The feature count is higher than some at this price point, but audio performance should be better ❐

VERDICT

Pleasing picture performance let down by sub-par audio

PICTURE	8/10
SOUND	7/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	8/10
OVERALL	8/10

SPECIFICATIONS

SAMSUNG DVD-811

GUIDE PRICE £300

KEY FEATURES
Built-in Dolby Digital decoder
DTS digital output
CD-R/RW and MP3 playback
3-D Sound
NTSC playback in quasi-PAL

WHAT'S GOOD
Plenty of connections and features

WHAT'S BAD
Handset design; below-average audio

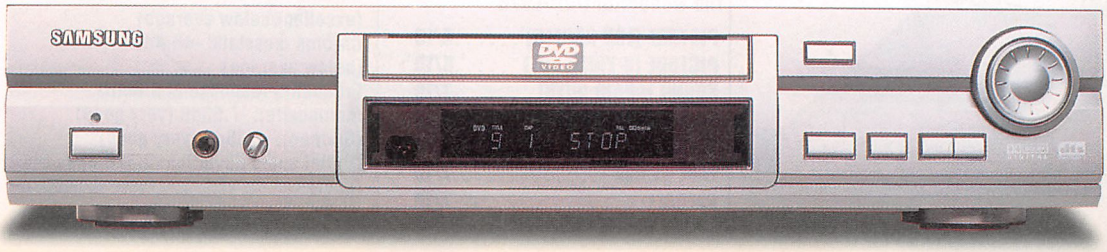
FEATURES
DVD/VCD/CD/CD-R playback; built-in Dolby Digital decoder; DTS digital output; MP3 compatible; NTSC playback in quasi-PAL; five-speed picture search; three bookmarks; x2/x4 picture zoom; 3-D sound; speaker size selection; test tone; centre/rear-channel delays; parental lock

SOCKETS
Front: headphone
Rear: two Scarts (one RGB); coaxial and optical digital outputs; two stereo audio outputs (phonos); two composite video outputs (phonos); S-video output; six-channel audio outputs (phonos);

DIMENSIONS
430(w) x 280(d) x 89(h)mm

CONTACT
Samsung ☎ 020 8391 0168
www.samsungdvd.com

TEST DATA
Video jitter: 5ns (good)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -67.0dB (average)
Chroma AM/PM: -68.8dB/-67.4dB (excellent/very good)
Chroma crosstalk: -56.0dB (good)
Frequency response at 5.8MHz (S-video): -8.37dB (very good) (composite): -8.25dB (very good)
Digital audio deviation: 2,104.9ps (below average)



TOY BOY

Got deep pockets? Fancy a portable DVD player? Panasonic's £900 DVD-LV55 claims to be the AV toy for you. But Ian Calcutt thinks you could do better

Panasonic continues to evolve its portable DVD players. The flagship is still the DVD-LV75 with 7in LCD screen (reviewed in our August issue), a marvellous but expensive luxury item. At the opposite end is the DVD-PV55, the same player but minus battery and screen – what's often called a transportable due to its small size but reliance on mains power and external screen.

Pitched between the two we have the DVD-LV55, which sports a battery and 5in screen.

DESCRIPTION

This is an attractive mini player. Controls, sockets and the ultra-slim credit card-sized remote are as found with Panasonic's other portables (see *Specifications* for details), except that the LV55 lacks a built-in Dolby Digital decoder. The screen is less impressive at 5in, but the 'footprint' of the player is the same, so there's no space saving, just a price saving.

OPERATION

A full battery charge (using LCD screen) lasts around 3.5hr, compared with the LV75's 4hr (without the screen on it's about 5hr). The usual DVD playback options and more are included, such as resume play, trick play, chapter search, programme playback, bookmarks and aspect ratio switching. Brightness and colour for the LCD display can also be altered.

Flat as a pancake, small as a credit card

Most features are accessed using the regular Panasonic user interface, although this looks minuscule on the 5in screen.

Because it's almost as small as a portable CD player and can perform those duties, the lack of CD-R/RW support is a letdown.

Design-wise, Sony's DVP-FX1 is better for non-screen playback, because its main buttons (Play, Stop, etc) are on the front, not under the folding screen.

PERFORMANCE

The LV75's 7in screen is a decent size for a portable and is of excellent quality. With the 5in LV55, the quality remains top-notch – with punchy picture contrast, lifelike colour and effective detail levels – but the size is underwhelming. Sitting over 45cm from the screen seriously diminishes the 'cinematic' DVD experience.

S-video playback on a large TV is less pleasing, from any distance. While detail levels remain high, colour is odd (borne out by wildly varying AM/PM and poor chroma crosstalk figures in our lab test) and the image is often noisy.

Sound, as noted in our review of the LV75, is poor from the player's tiny (and tinny) built-in speakers. Digital output via a receiver is not as impressive as the LV75 or PV55, with a muffled edge to dialogue and music.

CONCLUSION

The DVD-LV55 has all the looks and features of the larger-screen DVD-LV75. Unfortunately, the player is no smaller in overall size, despite the screen dimensions, and the AV performance via its outputs is worse. The price reduction may increase its appeal – although anyone who can spare £900 for a portable can probably stump up for a £1,200 DVD-LV75 ❐

VERDICT

Not really a viable alternative to the wonderful DVD-LV75

PICTURE (LCD SCREEN)	8/10
PICTURE (S-VIDEO OUT)	6/10
SOUND (AUDIO OUTS)	7/10
SOUND (OWN SPKRS)	4/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	7/10
OVERALL	7/10

SPECIFICATIONS

PANASONIC DVD-LV55

GUIDE PRICE £900

KEY FEATURES
5in 16:9 LCD screen
Rechargeable battery pack
Dolby Digital/DTS output
VSS virtual surround sound

WHAT'S GOOD
Looks; portability; screen quality

WHAT'S BAD
Small screen size; AV output quality

FEATURES
5in 16:9 LCD screen (with line-in); built-in stereo speakers; DVD, CD, VCD playback; Dolby Digital/DTS/MPEG Audio compatible; NTSC playback in PAL60; rechargeable Lithium-ion battery pack; credit card remote; onscreen menu; 2-level virtual surround sound; 96kHz audio output; dialogue enhancer; dynamic range compression; 5 bookmarks; chapter review; resume play; 5-speed slo mo & picture scanning; audio during search; repeat, A-B repeat, random & program play; soundtrack, angle & subtitle selection; LCD brightness/colour adjust; 3 picture size modes; parental lock

SOCKETS
Optical digital audio output/analogue stereo audio in/out (minijack); S-video output; composite video in/out (minijack); 9V DC in; headphone (minijack)

DIMENSIONS
185(w) x 140(d) x 25(h)mm

CONTACT
Panasonic ☎ 0990 357357
www.panasonic.co.uk

TEST DATA
Jitter: 29ns (below average)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -63dB (av)
Chroma AM/PM: -68.4dB/-59.5dB (excellent/below average)
Chroma crosstalk: -40.4dB (below average)
Frequency response at 5.8MHz (composite): -7.58dB (very good)
(S-video): -7.35dB (very good)
Digital audio deviation: 3,328.8ps (poor)

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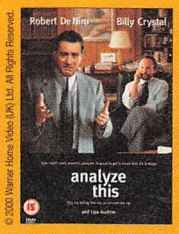

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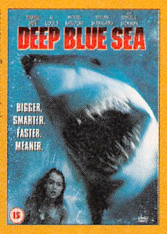

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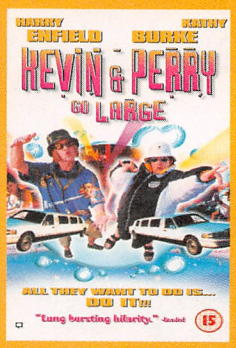

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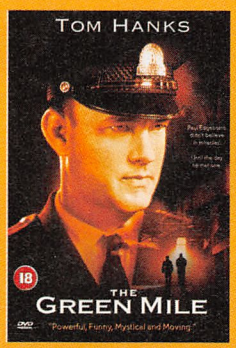

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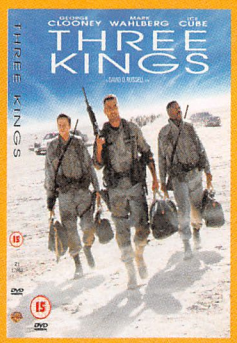

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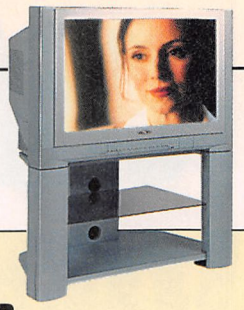


GREEN GIANT

Hitachi jumps on the designer TV bandwagon with the CL32WF720AN-300, complete with progressive scan. Steven 'Gucci' Armstrong tries it on for size

It's no longer enough for a TV merely to perform well. Many consumers are now also looking for a TV to enhance the aesthetics of their living rooms – which means the old black box approach no longer cuts it.

Hitachi was not one of the first companies to respond to that need, but it's making up for lost time with a recent surge in designer activity that has culminated in the two-tone green, flatscreen CL32WF720AN-300.

DESCRIPTION

Happily, the CL32WF720AN-300 – henceforth to be referred to as the CL32WF! – is a lot easier on the eye than its name is on the tongue. The gentle green immediately framing the 32in 16:9 flat screen accessorises nicely with the slightly darker green of the rest of the cabinet, making a subtly elegant impression. Lovers of bravura design may find the CL32WF a tad insipid, but when it's resting elegantly on its matching stand, it is a very attractive TV.

Unfortunately, the set houses a set of AV inputs under a flap on its front rather than sticking them down the side, which spoils the

designer aesthetics. But otherwise the only big gripe concerning the set's connections is that it only has two Scart sockets (one RGB and one S-video capable).

In these days of digiboxes, DVD players, VCRs and games consoles, this really is not enough for a TV with home cinema ambitions, and will leave many a cinephile having to use a Scart switchbox.

One unexpected connection bonus, though, is a pair of DIN sockets for adding optional external speakers.

OPERATION

The CL32WF bursts into life with a fuss-free auto tuning procedure, which is both fast and accurate. And moving into the operation menus continues the good work, with everything kept clear and simple. Only lesser-used features are tucked away in submenus.

This is not to say that there aren't plenty of features at your disposal, however. Leading the way are the CL32WF's 50Hz progressive scan capabilities, which claim to reduce visible line structure in an image and increase its stability. Should you prefer, the set can also be switched into 100Hz Natural Scan mode, which slightly enhances the stability but can leave lines and edges looking rougher.

There's also a highly flexible multipicture system. This allows you to split the screen into four, 12 or 16 mini screens, showing either a single channel as a series of freeze frames or snippets from all the channels at your disposal. You can also adjust the rate at which these multiscreens refresh, or else cut the picture in two to watch a programme on the left while using teletext on the right.

The number of picture tweaks available is prodigious. As well as multiple-strength noise reduction, tweaks such as a comb filter, colour transient improvement and velocity modulation are also placed in your hands.

This adds to the TV's complexity, but making them optional sensibly reflects the fact that wherever there's digital processing on a TV image, different picture settings can work better with different types of source material. For instance, switching off the comb filter for non-RGB digibox feeds can reduce dotty interference over small patches of colour.

"The digital circuitry can't handle imperfect source material"

Since the CL32WF is only a Nicam set, it's not surprising that audio finery is rather less extensive, with only a graphic equaliser and a loudness booster to really catch the eye.

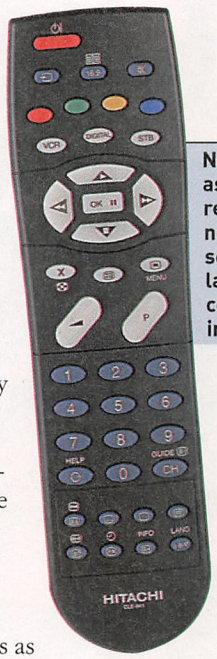
PERFORMANCE

Progressive scan's positives clearly overcome its negatives on really big screens such as the C36WF810N and C43WP910TN. But on screens of 32in and below, the slight dulling of colours and faintly processed look to pictures it produces fares badly when placed against rival sets.

Analogue pictures on the CL32WF look good, though. Neither progressive scan nor 100Hz modes produce many digital nasties like smearing or dot crawl – though they're not entirely free of them, particularly on outdoor broadcasts. It's as if the digital circuitry doesn't quite know what to do with imperfect source material.

This view is supported by digital TV viewing. Studio footage such as *Sky News* looks superb, with top-notch contrast, sumptuous colours and interference-free fine details. But when the cameras are operating in less controlled circumstances, during outside broadcasts, a slight dulling mushiness sets in.

A football match on BBC digital also revealed some green ghosting around the players, a trace smear left behind the ball as it moved at speed and a generally artificial feel.



Not as flash as the TV, this remote is nevertheless sensibly laid-out and comfortable in the hand

This again proves that the CL32WF is unsure of itself where there are impurities – in this case digital blocking artefacts – in the source picture.

Surprisingly, the CL32WF doesn't particularly come into its own with DVD. The purity of this picture source should bring the best out of the TV, but actually the image still tends to look slightly dull and processed.

The Nicam audio is decent but not great. The left-to-right separation is excellent, creating a wide but coherent soundstage, and the chassis can sustain high volumes. But there's a lack of dynamic range, with too much work being done by the mid-frequencies and too little support from the highs and lows. Playing with the graphic equaliser helps a little, but we recommend you use the external speaker terminals as soon as you can afford to.

CONCLUSION

The CL32WF is an accomplished TV. It sports a tasteful design, it's packed with picture technology and flexibility, and with certain source material its pictures can look impressive. But a recurring lack of vibrancy, together with some noticeable processing in 100Hz or progressive scan modes with imperfect source material, make it less pleasing on the inside than it is on the outside ❐

VERDICT

Chic looks, but the imaging processing is rather unforgiving

PICTURE	8/10
SOUND	7/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	9/10
OVERALL	8/10

SPECIFICATIONS

HITACHI CL32WF720AN-300

GUIDE PRICE.....£1,300

KEY FEATURES
Progressive scan
32in 16:9 screen
External front speakers support

WHAT'S GOOD
Looks; picture flexibility

WHAT'S BAD
Visible image processing; only two Scarts

FEATURES
16:9 screen; progressive scan/ 100Hz picture; freeze picture; picture-and-teletext split screen; 4, 12, or 16 multi picture; multilevel noise reduction; auto tuning; multiple widescreen modes; PAL, NTSC 3.58/4.43MHz playback; widescreen auto detect; Colour Transient Improvement on/off; Velocity Modulation on/off; comb filter on/off; black stretch; graphic equaliser; pseudo-stereo/stereo wide modes; Fastext; child lock; colour warmth adjust; sleep timer

SOCKETS
Rear: two Scarts (one RGB); stereo audio output; external stereo speaker DIN connections
Front: one S-video input; one composite input; stereo audio input; headphone jack

DIMENSIONS
883(w) x 572(d) x 551(h)

CONTACT
Hitachi ☎ 01628 643000
www.hitachi.consumer.eu.com

TEST DATA
Colour: slightly muted, but superbly separated and free of tizzing, though there is some slight ghosting around sharp edges
Geometry: excellent
Frequency response: average, with detail only clear through to 4.8MHz

HOLY TAU

Panasonic hopes to build on the success of its Tau flatscreen range with the £1,300 TX-32PK20. According to Steven Armstrong, those hopes are fulfilled

Panasonic's Tau TVs have come in all manner of guises. Some have had 100Hz, some haven't. Some have been widescreen, some haven't. Some have been Pro-Logic, some have been Nicam. But they've all had one thing in common: they've been great TVs. So the omens for the latest offering from the range, the Nicam, 100Hz, 32in widescreen TX-32PK20, are exceedingly good.

DESCRIPTION

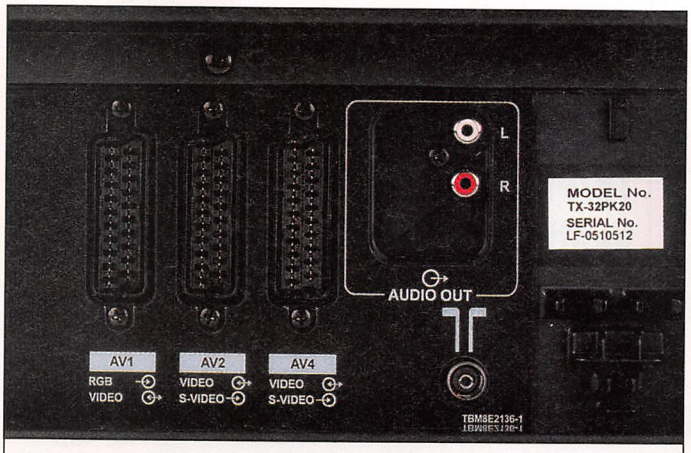
The now-familiar Tau look has been applied to the 32PK20 without adaptation – but that's no bad thing. While the light-silver, minimalist and clean-cut frame may not be quite as attractive as flatscreen sets from the likes of Philips and Sony, it's still appealing in an indomitable kind of way.

The set's socketry is fairly standard, with the usual complement of front and rear hookups. The only real point of interest is that while there are happily three Scarts (some of Panasonic's non-Tau sets only have two), sadly only one of them is RGB-compatible.

OPERATION

Let's start with a thumbs-up for the 32PK20's remote control. Its layout is inspired, making all the main buttons more easily accessible than any other handset we can think of.

The onscreen menu system is also near-foolproof, making this a wonderfully usable set that unnecessarily complicated rivals should learn from. Some of



Three Scarts is good, but sadly only one is RGB-compatible

these rivals might argue that this simplicity is due to an unspectacular features count for a high-end set. While we didn't feel particularly shortchanged in this department, we will admit that running through the more unusual features shouldn't take too long.

First there's a flicker reduction system, which when switched in removes the final traces of instability which even 100Hz TVs can suffer from on small areas of bright colour, such as lines on a football pitch.

Also there to help you get the pictures to your liking is a noise reduction system, which can automatically adjust its strength to the quality of the incoming signal. AI, meanwhile, automatically adjusts the picture to give the best contrast and depth of field depending on the image content.

Technophobes will appreciate Q-Link which, among other things, helpfully allows you to download the TV's tuner information to any Q-Link-equipped VCR.

Finally, there's a soundstage widening Ambient mode, as well as the facility to enter a password-protected address into the set's memory so police can return it to you if it's stolen and then recovered.

PERFORMANCE

After a few seconds of Sky digital viewing, it's clear that the likelihood of the 32PK20 blotting Panasonic's copybook is slim. Particularly eye-catching are the set's magnificently vibrant and rich colours. Ever since Panasonic developed its Quintrix colour-enhancing tubes three or four years back, its sets have been almost matchless in this crucial department, and they just keep getting better.

Of course, even Quintrix wouldn't be able to rescue this set's colours if the 100Hz processing started fuzzing edges, smearing motion and processing artefacts. But it doesn't. While other manufacturers are catching up with Panasonic's 100Hz technology, provided you keep flicker reduction off (more on this later) no competitors can better it.

Detail levels are high too, but what's really impressive about this is the seemingly effortless way in which they're achieved. There is simply no evidence of interference at all, not even the comb filter-induced dotty interference which plagues 80 per cent of other TVs.

The pictures are just about perfect. Even the geometry is spot-on, which again is something that's increasingly hard to say about most of this set's rivals.

The only source of discontent is the (thankfully optional) flicker reduction system. Basically, it just pushes the processing levels that critical bit too far, making pictures look a touch unnatural and, at times, much worse.

A classic example of this came while watching the recent England vs Germany debacle at Wembley. With flicker reduction on, every time the camera panned left or right across the pitch the image juddered most unpleasantly – and not even Kevin Keegan could be blamed for that.

Happily, the effect completely vanished with flicker reduction off, and although this meant the lines on the pitch looked fractionally less stable, it was a trade-off we were willing to make.

"Magnificently vibrant and rich colours"

Does DVD playback catch the 100Hz processing out? Absolutely not. DVD movies look cinematic, rich in contrast, and refreshingly clean.

Surprise surprise, it's hard to fault the 32PK20's sound, either. The speakers down the side of the TV don't look up to much, but in fact they perform admirably. Dialogue is particularly impressive, sounding exceptionally rich and well positioned.

In fact, audio effects of all sorts are accurately placed, with the set able to create a clean, wide soundstage that effortlessly rises to match big movie moments. The bass level is also respectable for a Nicam set, with action movies gaining a decent underpinning of rumble.

It might not look much, but start using it and you'll find its layout to be completely inspired

CONCLUSION

At the risk of repeating ourselves, Panasonic has done it again. The 32PK20 is a simply sublime widescreen TV. The sound is terrific, the pictures are terrific, and the operating system is... terrific.

If you have any doubts about 100Hz TVs, check this one out and you'll change your mind. Given the quality on offer, even the £1,300 price tag seems a steal ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY What Video & TV

A few more features wouldn't have gone amiss, but otherwise this is about as good as TVs get

PICTURE	10/10
SOUND	9/10
FEATURES	7/10
EASE OF USE	10/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

PANASONIC TX-32PK20

GUIDE PRICE.....£1,300

KEY FEATURES
100Hz
NTSC playback
Q-Link

WHAT'S GOOD
Pictures; sound; user system

WHAT'S BAD
Flicker reduction (so leave it off!)

FEATURES
AI Picture control; optional auto noise reduction; stereo sound with ambient mode; teletext; auto tuning; Q-Link; multiple aspect ratios; picture freeze; 100Hz; 2 x 20W audio; colour balance adjust; music/speech sound modes; off timer; flicker reduction; volume correction; address security; Panasonic DVD/VCR control from TV handset

SOCKETS:
Front: headphone jack; S-video input; composite video input; stereo audio input
Rear: three Scarts (one RGB, two S-video compatible); stereo audio output; RF input

DIMENSIONS
558(h) x 812(w) x 572(d)mm

CONTACT
Panasonic ☎ 0990 357357
www.panasonic.co.uk

TEST DATA
Colour: excellent, no bleed, noise or ghosting to report.
Geometry: excellent, no obvious flaws anywhere
Frequency response: excellent, details evident to 5.8MHz

DEUTSCHE DIAMOND

Grundig advances the cause of TV/PC convergence with its £1,400 Xentia set. John Archer revels in *Quake* on the big screen

Pulling down the Berlin wall is clearly not enough for our German friends. Now they're hell bent on ripping down the barriers between PC and TV too. German outfit Grundig's latest 32in widescreen TV, the flatscreen MFW 82-490/9 – or Xentia 82 to its pals – sports a PC VGA input, bringing potential joy to millions who wish they could play *Quake* on something a tad bigger than a 17in monitor.

DESCRIPTION

The Xentia will also bring a smile to the face of anyone who likes their TVs to look a bit different. Perched atop its matching stand the set looks superb, blending style with impressively robust build quality to great effect. It sure is heavy, though.

Aside from the VGA input the Xentia's sockets are fairly standard, except that the usual front AV inputs are sensibly tucked under a panel down the side to preserve the front-end aesthetics. It's also pleasing to find that two of the three Scart sockets are RGB compatible.

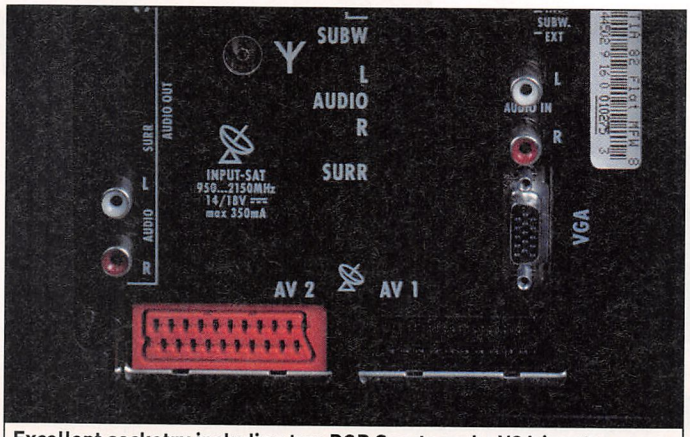
OPERATION

The Xentia's user system is generally good. A pleasing number of features can be accessed by a single button press, but even those features only available from onscreen menus are easy to find and change.

The Xentia also carries Grundig's inspired interactive instruction manual. If you want more information on a menu option just press the remote's '?' key to call up a detailed explanation. Or if you want to know more about a button on the remote, you can do that via an onscreen picture of the remote, too.

Downers? Well, some of the onscreen explanations are rather inscrutable, and the DialogCenter main operation menu can be long-winded. Also, rather than choosing universal picture preferences you tediously have to set your picture preferences for each separate channel.

Features are numerous, giving exceptional – almost excessive – control of audio



Excellent socketry including two RGB Scarts and a VGA input

and video preferences. Highlights include a Perfect Clear contrast booster, three levels of picture noise reduction, white balance adjust, picture rotation for correcting sloping caused by the Earth's magnetic field, an optional comb filter and line flicker reduction. This latter function derives from the fact that the set features 100Hz processing.

signal is only produced via a virtual surround mode.

PERFORMANCE

Starting out with Sky digital signals, we're enormously impressed with the Xentia's almost complete absence of 100Hz processing artefacts. Smearing, blockiness, dot crawl, artificial flesh tones – none of these nasties are a problem.

"Edges are impressively sharp, even around aggressive hues"

Always good to find on a 16:9 TV is a picture-and-teletext split-screen mode. However, the Xentia blots its copybook by simply cutting a 16:9 ratio main picture in half when in this mode, rather than doing what most sets do and compressing the picture so that you can still see most of what's going on.

Getting greedy for a moment, it's a shame, too, that there aren't any picture-in-picture facilities. But all is not lost in that department. Happily, you can get an £80 twin-tuner picture-in-picture module as an optional extra.

Final highlights are Megalogic, which enables enhanced communication between the TV and a compatible VCR and Pro-Logic decoding. Since no rear speakers are included with or can be added to the TV, though, this Pro-Logic

Attractive, tactile, and easy to use

This certainly marks a major progression from previous Grundig 100Hz sets, as does the general absence of grain (particularly if you use the astutely judged NR's Weak setting).

The transparency of the 100Hz processing also plays a vital part in allowing the colours to impress, both with their vibrancy and their naturalness. Edges are impressively sharp too, even around particularly aggressive hues.

Analogue broadcasts look even better than digital ones, being brighter and more vibrant, although smearing does start to appear if the source signal is a weak one.

VGA images look great too. Seeing your PC desktop and games looking almost as sharp (though they soften towards the edges) on a screen this size is a preview of the happy day when the TV and PC converge into one complete home entertainment centre.

Surprisingly, the least impressive aspect of the Xentia's performance is with DVD. It's still impressive, but *Magnolia* looks a touch grainier than we know it could. Calling in the weakest level of noise reduction helps, but also produces the side effect of occasional 100Hz image lag.

DVD viewing uncovers a bizarre glitch, too. If you have a device capable of automatic Scart aspect ratio switching – such as a Sky digibox – attached to one of the Scarts, when you are watching a DVD the TV switches from the DVD's AV input to the digibox's AV input every time a signal from the digibox triggers an aspect ratio change! The solution to this is to switch the digibox into standby.

The only serious negatives with the Xentia's pictures are some poor screen geometry (particularly evident in bendiness down the side of a 4:3 image), and a slight shortage of detail.

When it comes to audio, initial worries that the Xentia's speaker positioning (in a strip beneath the screen rather than down the sides) would lead to a constricted soundstage prove largely unfounded. Effects aren't thrown as far as some sets manage, but the Xentia still produces an impressively authentic wall of sound.

This is aided and abetted by some excellent bass, dialogue and volume handling. Typically though, Dolby Surround mode doesn't add much to the impressive Nicam effort. Stick with stereo.

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

Stunningly attractive, a fine performer, and equipped with that all-important VGA killer app

PICTURE	8/10
SOUND	9/10
FEATURES	9/10
EASE OF USE	8/10
OVERALL	9/10

CONCLUSION

With the Xentia 82 Grundig has taken a big step forward in terms of design, features and performance. In an ideal world we'd like DVD playback to be a touch cleaner, while the poor geometry and 'accidental' AV switching suggest Grundig should be more careful with its testing procedures. But judged against other 100Hz 32in TVs the Xentia is a real contender ❐

SPECIFICATIONS

GRUNDIG XENTIA 82 MFW 82-490/9

GUIDE PRICE.....£1,400

KEY FEATURES
VGA input
NTSC playback
Picture-and-teletext split screen

WHAT'S GOOD
Pictures; sound; features

WHAT'S BAD
Geometry; accidental AV switching

FEATURES
Auto tuning; multiple widescreen modes; Virtual Dolby mode; Megalogic; 640 x 480, 640 x 400 and 640 x 350-pixel VGA modes supported; stereo wide mode; three levels of noise reduction; line flicker reduction option; optional comb filter; graphic equaliser; 2 x 10W audio output; picture-and-teletext split screen; onscreen instruction manual; picture rotation; Perfect Clear contrast boost; white balance adjust; picture freeze; parental lock; volume limiter; eco mains switch; record, alarm, remind and sleep timers; optional twin-tuner PIP

SOCKETS
Front: S-video, composite video & stereo audio inputs; headphone jack
Rear: three Scarts (two RGB); stereo audio output; stereo audio input; VGA input; RF input

DIMENSIONS
With stand: 800(w) x 1,150(h) x 620(d)mm
Without stand: 800(w) x 616(h) x 575(d)mm

CONTACT
Grundig ☎ 020 8324 9400
www.grundig.co.uk

TEST DATA
Colour: very good. Vibrant, minimal bleed and only slight ghosting.
Geometry: fair
Frequency response: fair, nothing much shown beyond 4.8MHz

LOGISTICAL NIGHTMARE

£300 for a 28in TV is a remarkable price. But Schneider's 2817 exacts a toll in other ways, notably the most hellish operating system known to man. Gareth Mason struggles through

We haven't seen a widescreen TV this affordable since Schneider brought out a 28in TV for £300. That was the 2816, which was awarded a Best Buy in our April '00 issue due to its impressive picture and excellent price. Can the '17' match its sweet 16 predecessor, or is this the mate with acne?

DESCRIPTION

The 2817's prominent speakers hold in the wide expanse of glass like a couple of thick sideburns. The non-flatscreen tube is not as curvaceous as some we've seen, and is more of a low rise than a hill in shape.

Front controls are minimal. Centre-stage is an unnecessarily

large On button, which takes as long as 6sec to switch on after a brief flash of red light, making it hard to tell whether it's turned off or on.

Alongside is a quartet of volume and channel buttons and a headphone socket. To the rear are two Scarts – one input only, the second two-way, accommodating both S-video and RGB – essential for high-quality home cinema viewing. The handset is small and simple enough to be handled both intuitively and one-handed.

OPERATION

Initially, we didn't get on with the 2817 for two reasons: the manual and the onscreen menus. Short of writing it in Latvian, there is little Schneider hasn't done to confuse and waste your time here. Every page reference is followed by a question mark (as opposed to a number), explanations of how things work are irritating and long-winded, and there's no chronological thread taking you from new purchase to satisfied customer.

And if you try and work things out for yourself, the menu system will do nothing to help. An efficient channel-tuning system is sometimes measured by the time it takes to boil the kettle. In this case you could put the kettle on a London-Birmingham train and you'd still be looking for Channel 5 when it terminated.

While supposedly having the wherewithal to store 99 channels, the 2817 has a deep reluctance to store more than three. After a dozen attempts we were able to sort the channels into their correct order, despite being unfamiliar with stations such as BBC On and Carlto.

Picture 'values' include the regulars: brightness, contrast and colour, as well as the rather obscure-sounding 'contour', the operation of which makes no apparent difference to the TV picture at any level. Whatever this is, it's explained (not) by the manual as 'a matter of personal preference.'

Audio 'values' includes an option which widens the soundstage noticeably, called 'base' (pronounced 'bass'), not to be confused with bass, the feature above it on the menu.

Small, simple and intuitive – unlike the TV!

Picture ratio options are 4:3, which fills a 23in portion of the screen, and 16:9, which only offers 26in from corner to corner (the rest is covered by the TV's casing). Also available is the now-defunct PALplus widescreen format and zoom, which fills the whole screen with the normally broadcast 4:3 ratio – though usually with the loss of subtitles and thespian scalps.

> **"There's little Schneider hasn't done to confuse and waste your time"**

Other features include the surreally entitled 'interference' (which actually sets the level for the 'surround' signal for the two pseudo-surround audio options), and timer, which lets you choose a time for the TV to shut off up to 24 hours in advance. Finally, childlock allows you to block off the use of one or more channels – though you might need a technophile child to help you unlock it later.

PERFORMANCE

It's hard to find fault with TV broadcasts. Definition is sharp while colours are true and well contained, without any noticeable bleeding. Some bright colours, notably yellows and blues, glare and shimmer slightly, and are bordered by otherwise sparse dot crawl.

While the above problems are noticeable, particularly in the 2817's objection to the garish colours of Channel 5 quiz shows, overall performance is to the tuner's credit.

Fine detail is respectable but faces tend to have a smudged effect, where top-of-the-range TVs would have pin-sharp detail. This increases when 4:3 broadcasts are stretched into one of the fullscreen modes.

Teletext reception is flawless – overcoming indifferent local reception. If Top and Flop text are broadcast you can use the colour-coded buttons to manoeuvre about. As well as basic options such as mix (text and pictures) and zoom, you can select East or West, which are themselves sub-divided into different countries. This is, after all, a multistandard TV.

These days, home cinema means DVD rather than VHS, and the 2817 graduates with honours in both the RGB and S-video modes. We tested it with the region-free *Earthview* disk, and it handled the challenging darkness and light of near space with aplomb. The set also has little difficulty resolving the high-speed action in *From Dusk till Dawn*.

Nicam stereo is reassuringly loud and clear as you crank up the wick, with no distortion from the 2 x 6W RMS internal speakers. When compared to an external audio system using a Dolby Digital soundtrack, however, cracks begin to show. A harsher, jarring tone becomes apparent, along with the limitations on the extremes of bass and treble.

Virtual Dolby Surround and Panorama Sound options are similar in effect and quality to most of their equivalents. We recommend sticking with good old Nicam.

CONCLUSION

For all the brickbats thrown at the 2817's handling, it represents excellent value for the most important characteristics, namely screen size and shape and AV performance.

While there is room for improvement in areas which shouldn't effect the price – ie the manual and operating procedures – this is a solid first step into the home cinema world ❐

VERDICT

Decent AV performance and great price blighted by migraine-inducing operation system

PICTURE	8/10
SOUND	7/10
FEATURES	7/10
EASE OF USE	3/10
OVERALL	6/10

SPECIFICATIONS

SCHNEIDER SCINEMA 2817

GUIDE PRICE £300

KEY FEATURES
26in 16:9 screen
Multistandard
Nicam stereo

WHAT'S GOOD
Price; decent AV performance

WHAT'S BAD
Torturous to use

FEATURES
26in visible 16:9 screen; Nicam stereo; multistandard; Top/Flop teletext; auto tuning; 4:3, 16:9 and zoom picture modes; timer; child lock; Virtual Dolby and Panorama surround; 12-language onscreen menus

SOCKETS
Two Scarts (one with RGB and S-video); aerial input

DIMENSIONS
760(w) x 510(d) x 565(h)mm

CONTACT
Schneider UK ☎ 0161 374 0101
www.schneider-ag.de

TEST DATA
Colour: very good, minimal bleed
Geometry: good
Frequency response: good to 5.8MHz

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WEST MIDLANDS AND WALES

ABINGDON MODULATIONS, 64 WOTTON ROAD, 01235 585713
BIRMINGHAM PREMIER AV CENTRE, 109 SOHO ROAD, 0121 523 9997
BRACKNELL B&B HIFI, PRINCE'S SQUARE, 01344 424556
CARDIFF SONY CENTRE, 8 DUKE STREET, 01222 228020
CHELTENHAM SONY CENTRE, REGENT ARCADE, 01242 226589

PGV632 ... there is a positive difference ... saturated colours look better. In audio terms the presentation is quite dynamic'

WHAT VIDEO & TV MAY 2000

CHELTENHAM AUDIO T, 40-42 ALBION STREET, 01242 583960
GLOUCESTER SONY CENTRE, WORCESTER STREET, 01452 500005
LEAMINGTON SPA STRATFORD HIFI, 23A REGENT STREET, 01926 888644
NEWBURY B&B HIFI, 41 NORTHBROOK STREET, 01635 32474
OXFORD AUDIO T LTD, 19 OLD HIGH STREET, 01865 765961
OXFORD OXFORD AUDIO CONSULTANTS, PARK END STREET, 01865 790879
READING AUDIO T, BROAD STREET MALL, 01734 585463
STRATFORD UPON AVON STRATFORD HIFI, 10A CHAPEL STREET, 01789 414533
SWINDON HICKMANS LTD, BRUNEL CENTRE, 01793 537971
SWINDON SONY CENTRE, 39B HAVELOCK STREET, 01793 531039
SWINDON AUDIO T, LTD 60 FLEET STREET, 01793 538222
WALLINGFORD ASTLEYS, 3 MARKET PLACE, 1491 839305
WITNEY V DELNEVO, 363 HIGH STREET, 01993 776677

LONDON SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST

ADDLESTONE COSMIC, 244-256 STATION ROAD, 01932 854522
ASHFORD SOUNDCRAFT, 40 HIGH STREET, 01233 624441
BEXLEYHEATH EDC, 109 THE BROADWAY, 0208 298 7880
CAMBERLEY AUDIO T, 173-175 LONDON ROAD, 01276 685597
EASTBOURNE JEFFRIES HIFI, GREEN STREET, 01323 731336
EPSOM AUDIO T, 15 UPPER HIGH STREET, 01372 748888
LONDON SW11 1ST STOP AUDIO VISUAL, 83 LAVENDER HILL, 0207 978 6262

PGV632 ... the Profigold cable system is well made, with good fittings and a respectable performance, all at a very reasonable price'

Home Entertainment OCT 1999

MAIDSTONE HOME MEDIA 2000, 24-26 UNION STREET, 01622 676703
OXTED AUDIO VISION, 34 STATION ROAD WEST, 01883 615617
PORTSMOUTH JEFFRIES HIFI, 29 LONDON ROAD, 01705 663604
REDHILL TRU FI, LONDON ROAD, 01737 767404
ST LEONARDS ON SEA ADAMS & JARRETT, 6-18 NORMAN ROAD, 01424 437165
TUNBRIDGE WELLS AUDIO T, 6 HIGH STREET, 01892 525666

SOUTH WEST

BASINGSTOKE AUDIO T, 4 FEATHERS LANE, 01256 24311
BOURNEMOUTH MOVEMENT AUDIO, 926 WIMBORNE ROAD, 01202 520066
BRISTOL SONY CENTRE, 8-10 BOND STREET, 0117 929 0448
BRISTOL LASERVISION, BELLEWE ROAD, 0117 972 0149
CHANDLERS FORD TASS, 91 BOURNEMOUTH ROAD, 01703 262916
POOLE MOVEMENT AUDIO, 588 ASHLEY ROAD, 01702 730865
SALISBURY SALISBURY HIFI, 15 CATHERINE STREET, 01722 322169
SOUTHAMPTON AUDIO T, 2-12 HURSLEY, 01703 252827
WEYMOUTH WEYMOUTH HIFI, 33-35 MAIDEN STREET, 01305 785729

EAST MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA

BISHOP'S STORTFORD THE AUDIO FILE, 27 HOCKERILL STREET, 01279 506576
CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE HIFI, 1-3 HAWTHORN WAY, 0500 203576
HARPENDEN STUDIO82, 82 HIGH STREET, 01582 764246
IPSWICH THE EDGE SOUND & VISION, 92 NORWICH ROAD, 01473 288211
IPSWICH SONY CENTRE, 6 THE BUTTERMARKET CENTRE, 01473 216556
LEICESTER PROFILE VISION, 10 BLABY ROAD, 0116 278 2198
NOTTINGHAM FORUM HIFI & VIDEO, 600-602 MANSFIELD ROAD, 0115 962 2150

PGV8922... the aerial antenna coaxial cable led to a perceptual difference in picture clarity, and reductions in video noise'

Home Entertainment OCT 1999

NORTH

BRADFORD POWER CENTRE, 57 NORTH PARADE, 01274 722530
FARNWORTH SOUND & VISION, 44 HIGHER MARKET STREET, 01204 861861
HULL A FANTHORPE LTD, SILVER STREET, 01482 223096
LIVERPOOL BEAVER RADIO LTD, 20-22 WHITECHAPEL, 0151 709 9898
SHEFFIELD MOORGATE ACOUSTICS, 184 FITZWILLIAM STREET, 0114 275 6048

SCOTLAND AND NORTH EAST

GLASGOW ALLAN JAMES HIFI, 43 HOPE STREET, 0141 248 4434
GLASGOW ERIC HAMILTON HIFI, 118 QUEEN MARGARET DRIVE, 0141 946 9218
GOUROCK DILLONS AUDIO VISUAL, 86-88 KEMPOCK STREET, 01475 659111
NEWCASTLE ON TYNE GLOBAL AUDIO, 87A CLAYTON STREET, 0191 232 3600
STOCKTON ON TEES MSV, PORTRACK LANE, 01642 494494

CHANNEL ISLANDS

GUERNSEY, C.I. ART PRODUCTS (GRUTS), 3-5 THE POLLET, 01481 710956
JERSEY, C.I. REEGIL ELECTRICS, 7 QUENNEVAIS PRECINCT, 01534 44479
JERSEY, C.I. WHOLESALE ELECTRICS, 95-97 HACKET PLACE, 01534 21551

LONDON NORTH AND ESSEX

BRENTWOOD AUDIO T, 30 CROWN STREET, 01277 264730
ENFIELD AUDIO T, 159A CHASE ROAD, 0208 367 3132
HIGH WYCOMBE AUDIO T, 30-32 CASTLE STREET, 01494 558585
LONDON W1P MUSICAL VISION, 20-21 TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, 0207 636 6025
LONDON W1P HARP ELECTRONICS, 237 TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, 0207 636 4611
LONDON NW3 SEVENOAKS HIFI, 21 NORTHWAYS PARADE
LONDON NW6 AUDIO T, 190 WEST END LANE, 0207 794 7848
LONDON SW10 SONY CENTRE, 387 KINGS ROAD, 0207 795 0500
LONDON W1P SHASONIC, 42 TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, 0207 323 0333
LONDON W1P HIFI CARE, 231 TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, 0207 637 8911
LONDON W1P PNR AUDIO VISION, 28 TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, 0208 580 9098
LONDON W8 SONY CENTRE, 203 KENSINGTON HIGH STREET, 0207 938 3994

PGV6032... we were very pleased with the fast-paced & detailed sound'

WHAT VIDEO & TV MAY 2000

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WHAT HI-FI?
August 2000 ★★★★★
PGV6602

PHONO INTERLINK

October 1996 ★★★★☆
PGA301 £39.99 1m

'The 301 presents vocals with beautiful clarity. Bass is well-extended and controlled'

PHONO INTERLINK

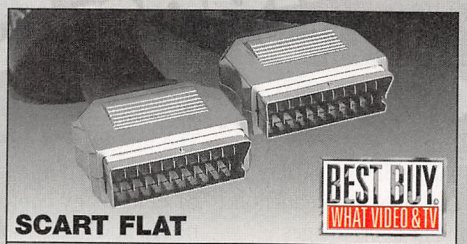
August 1999 ★★★★☆
PGA4201 £14.99 1m

'The 4201 sounds coherent and energetic for the money, with impressive detail'

DIGITAL COAXIAL

April 2000 **Rating 10/10**
PGD491 £29.99 0.75m

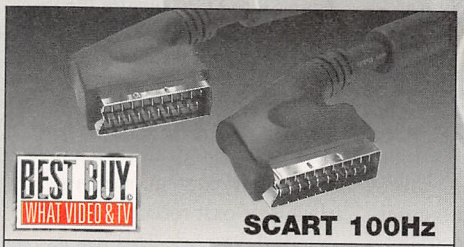
'The cable worked exceptionally well with our Hitachi DVD player and Denon recorder, conveying a clear and dynamic sound'



SCART FLAT

May 2000 **Rating 9/10**
PGV782 £29.99 1.5m

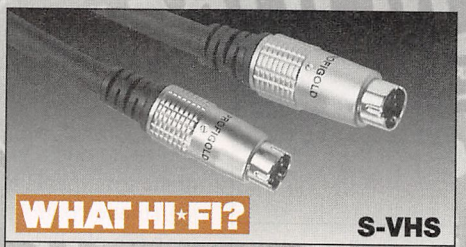
'... lead is unusual ... cable is flat ... there's a noticeable improvement over the average Scart lead in terms of video and audio'



SCART 100Hz

May 2000 **Rating 9/10**
PGV792 £39.99 1.5m

'There's a distinct improvement in picture clarity relative to standard Scarts, while the sound is pacey and dynamic'



S-VHS

August 2000 ★★★★★
PGV6602 £14.99 1.5m

'The Profigold is an excellent way to soup up your system without breaking the bank. At this price... it's a steal!'

AUDIO

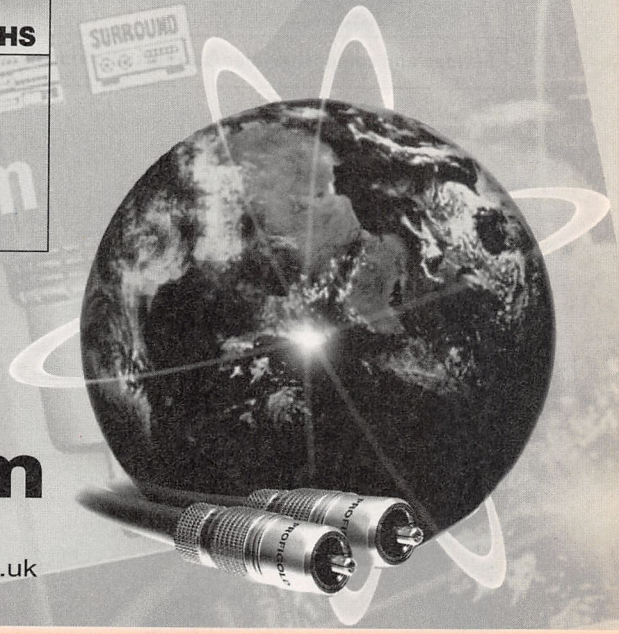
PGA301	2 Phono - 2 Phono Superior (pair)	1m	£39.99
PGA4201	2 Phono - 2 Phono Also 0.5m, 3m, 5m, 10m	1m	£14.99
PGA3302	3.5mm Stereo - 3.5mm Stereo	1.2m	£14.99
PGA3402	3.5mm Stereo - 2 Phono Also 3m, 5m	1.2m	£14.99

DIGITAL

PGD491	DIGITAL Coaxial Superior	0.75m	£29.99
PGD481	DIGITAL Coaxial Also 3m, 5m	1m	£19.99
PGD561	DIGITAL Optical Also 3m, 5m	1m	£19.99
PGD572	DIGITAL Optical 3.5 - Optical 3.5	1.5m	£24.99
PGD582	DIGITAL Optical - Optical 3.5mm	1.5m	£24.99

VIDEO

PGV6032	Phono - Phono	1.5m	£9.99
PGV5302	3 Phono - 3 Phono	1.5m	£19.99
PGV512	Phono - SCART Also 3m, 5m	1.5m	£14.99
PGV522	SCART - 3 Phono Also 3m	1.5m	£29.99
PGV722	3 Phono - SCART	1.5m	£29.99
PGV762	SCART - 6 Phono	1.5m	£39.99
PGV532	SCART - SVHS/2 Phono Also 3m, 5m	1.5m	£29.99
PGV632	SVHS/2 Phono - SCART Also 3m	1.5m	£29.99
PGV6602	S-VHS - S-VHS Also 3m, 5m 10m	1.5m	£14.99
PGV672	S-VHS - SCART Also 3m, 5m	1.5m	£19.99
PGV7392T	SCART - SCART (Transparent silver) Also 3m	1.5m	£24.99
PGV782	SCART - SCART Also 0.75m, 3m, 5m, 10m	1.5m	£29.99
PGV792	SCART - SCART (Superior) Also 3m, 5m	1.5m	£39.99
PGV8902	COAX - COAX (mm) (Metal Plug Housing)	2m	£9.99
PGV8922	COAX - COAX (m-f) Also 0.75m, 3m, 5m, 10m	2m	£9.99



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Connecting our world

SUPER TROOPER

Panasonic's flagship NV-HS960 is a €450 S-VHS deck laden with features. Camcorder enthusiast Peter Wells checks out its video editing prowess

S-VHS is slowly but surely being pushed into the mainstream consumer market, but this push is a belated one. The format could have done very well 10 years ago, had VCRs been available at reasonable prices.

Today digital technology is grabbing our imaginations and the old analogue formats' days are numbered. Still, while D-VHS is only available at a premium price, there's little choice for anyone on a tight budget.

Panasonic's NV-HS960 promises to be a great deck all round, however, supporting S-VHS/VHS recording and playback, as well as allowing recording of S-VHS footage on VHS tapes in S-VHS ET mode.

"Off-air recording is excellent"

On top of all that it sports a flying erase head for clean cutting, a Time Base Corrector (TBC) for stable picture quality and a 3D Digital Noise Reduction system, to help keep images clean. There's also a LANC and five-pin edit socket, allowing the HS960 to be controlled for linear editing, where it can perform assemble and insert edits based on the tape's control track.

S-video and composite video/stereo audio hide behind a flap

DESCRIPTION

The unit itself is rather large, and is housed in a muted grey case. Its many controls are neatly and simply arranged. The front panel sports the tape carriage and LCD display, plus power and eject buttons. To the left of the tape carriage is a button to turn the TBC on and off, and a button to select and deselect S-VHS ET recording mode. To the right is a button to activate the 3D DNR system.

On the LCD panel itself are buttons for basic linear editing functions such as insert editing and audio dub. On the far right of the front panel is the VCR's jog/shuttle control, and buttons for basic playback control.

A small panel on the far left folds down to reveal a single set of AV inputs.

The rear is just as simple, sporting two Scart sockets, S-video, composite and stereo inputs and outputs, LANC port, 5-pin edit terminal plus auxiliary in and out.

Virtually all basic functions are handled by the remote, which is neatly designed and uncluttered, with timer controls and more specialised functions hidden beneath a discreet sliding panel.

OPERATION

The HS960 tunes in quickly and sets the clock automatically. Timer setting (with or without VideoPlus) is simple, and the HS960 will, if required, switch from SP to LP to ensure the entire programme is recorded to tape. The HS960 also offers EP mode, for extra-long recording.

One of Panasonic's major selling points for this deck is its tape library system, which stores details of past recordings in its internal memory. This has its

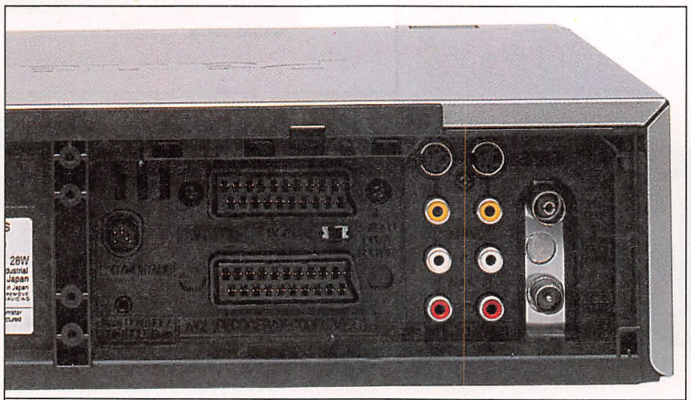
limitations, however. The memory holds 600 programmes with titles of eight characters, or up to 900 with fewer characters.

Tape details can be edited or erased, and where a broadcast is received with an EPG, titles and details are added automatically. We found the tape library system a tad annoying when playing prerecorded tapes, as the VCR wasted time trying to identify the tape when it was inserted.

The HS960's most impressive feature is its ability to be used as part of a linear editing system. Round the back is a 5-pin edit port and a LANC socket, allowing it to be linked up to – and controlled by – an edit controller. In this case, it was connected via an edit cable to a Panny DV VCR, the NV-DV2000, which has its own linear edit controller.

In this setup, both devices worked together sweetly, and we were able to edit quickly and easily in either direction.

The HS960's flying erase head kept cuts sharp and glitch-free, while its support of insert editing (the ability to overwrite video without disturbing any existing audio) and audio dubbing allowed for some fairly complex two-machine editing.



The HS960B sports LANC but can only be used as a master deck

This ease of control did not, however, extend to the same combination of devices connected via LANC. Although the HS960 sports a LANC socket, this is limited to control of a camcorder with the deck acting as the master unit. It can't be used as the slave unit in a LANC-based system.

A simple, ergonomic design which feels good in the hand

Another feature worth noting is Still Album, which grabs stills from an attached camcorder or digital camera (hooked up via the front AV connections), and stores them as a slideshow on tape.

PERFORMANCE

The HS960 does everything that is asked of it without complaint. It feels sturdy, and is extremely nippy with its fast-forward and rewind speeds.

Off-air recording on both VHS and S-VHS tapes is excellent, with the Time Base Corrector and noise reduction system working wonders to produce good clean copies.

Bear in mind that S-VHS ET recordings should be made on high-grade tapes, otherwise you get far more noise and grain than on ordinary VHS recordings.

Naturally, long play recordings carry more noise than standard play, but the results are still watchable and sufficient for general recording purposes.

Recordings made in EP mode are fairly ropy, and really only suitable for the most basic of timeshifting, where picture quality isn't all-important.

Colour reproduction is impressive, and noise levels low in standard play. The TBC and noise reduction system are obvious bonuses for extracting good results from everyday recording, although they are best left off when dubbing from impeccably clean sources such as DV.

CONCLUSION

The HS960 is as good a domestic VHS/S-VHS machine as you could hope to get. It delivers excellent picture quality and has more features than the average punter is likely to need.

For video editors it's a superb machine – so long as it's part of a Panasonic-based system. The price point of £450 will be a bit steep for many, and there's no lack of basic timeshifting VHS decks at low prices.

We feel this is more or less where S-VHS should have been many years ago and, while its assimilation into the mainstream is extremely late, it's no less welcome. For the creative user, or the truly quality-conscious, this could well be the best bet for a jack-of-all-trades VCR ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

Fantastic all-round performance despite editing limitations

PICTURE	9/10
SOUND	9/10
FEATURES	9/10
EDITING FEATURES	9/10
EASE OF USE	9/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

PANASONIC NV-HS960B

GUIDE PRICE £450

KEY FEATURES

S-VHS, S-VHS ET & VHS
Nicam stereo
NTSC playback
Linear editing features

WHAT'S GOOD

Picture and sound quality; ease of use; TBC and DNR

WHAT'S BAD

Annoying tape logging system; limited use of LANC

FEATURES

S-VHS, VHS and S-VHS ET recording and playback; Nicam stereo; hi-fi sound; digital TBC; 3D DNR; four heads; LANC and 5-pin edit terminals; jog/shuttle on deck; VideoPlus; tape library system; automatic SP/LP change function; index search system; insert edit; audio dub; front AV inputs; audio level control

SOCKETS

Front: S-video in; composite in; L/R stereo audio in
Rear: two Scarts; S-video in/out; composite in/out; L/R audio in/out; RF in/out (coax); 5-pin edit terminal; LANC

DIMENSIONS

430(w) x 87(h) x 301(d) mm

TEST DATA

S-VHS ET mode:
Frequency response at 3.5MHz: -9.8dB (fair)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -41.4dB (fair)
Chroma AM/PM: -48.7dB/-46.0dB (excellent/excellent)
Jitter: 2ns (excellent)
Horizontal resolution: 350 lines
Dynamic range: very good
Grain/dot crawl: good/good

GOLDEN NUGGET

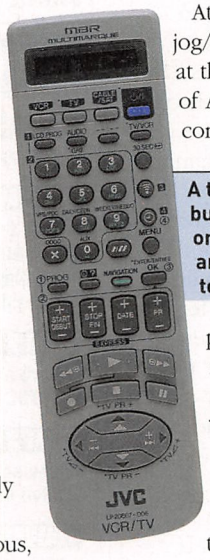
Like Panasonic, JVC is hoping to restore life to the S-VHS format, with its £320 HR-S8700EK. Peter Wells, our video editing expert, makes his assessment

S-VHS has been around for a number of years, but only in the last two have players and tapes become affordable. All this seems too little too late, as JVC is also trying hard to push its D-VHS format straight into the consumer arena.

Still, the HR-S8700EK costs a good deal less than the D-VHS model. It takes up less space too, although it's still a hefty beast.

DESCRIPTION

In the wrong light, the S8700EK's gold exterior has all the style and class of a Christmas tree bauble. It's obviously an attempt to make the deck look more glamorous, but only succeeds in making it seem even bigger than it really is.



A tad busy, but well ordered and easy to navigate

The front fascia sports the standard play, pause, etc buttons, plus a button to activate S-VHS ET mode and one to toggle the digital Time Base Corrector (TBC) and noise reduction system on and off.

At the far right is a jog/shuttle control, and at the bottom left is a set of AV inputs. These aren't concealed by any flaps, but are deeply recessed into the body of the machine for protection. In the centre is the tape carriage, and below that resides the LCD display.

On either side of the LCD is a set of four buttons. Those to the left are for browsing through programs, choosing 'synchro edit mode' and toggling between SP, LP and EP recordings. The rear has only a basic array of connections, comprising two Scart sockets, S-video out, composite video out, and left/right stereo audio out.

There's also a small socket for a pause controller, a LANC socket, a JLIP socket and coax in/out. Rounding things off is a small jack socket for a satellite controller. The handset is nicely compact but, at first, looks overloaded with buttons. It's very well laid-out however, and is easy to navigate.

OPERATION

Auto tuning of the S8700EK is accessed via the menu, and works quickly and painlessly. The strongest signals are found first time round, and the clock is set in the process. Video recording is hindered, however, by JVC's BEST recording system, which spends a good 7sec sorting itself out before allowing the tape to roll. It can be turned off in the menus, and we recommend doing just that.

"Playback of prerecorded VHS tapes is excellent"

The TBC and noise reduction system are activated via a single button, unlike on the Panasonic machine, where each has its own button. While SP, LP and ET recording can be accessed from the handset, S-VHS ET recording, the TBC and noise reduction can only be turned on or off on the front panel of the VCR itself. Fast-forward and rewind is pleasingly zippy.

T-V Link is also supported here, allowing the VCR to

receive EPG information from compatible TVs. Title editing allows creation and storage of basic information about the tape's contents, which can later be read back and displayed by the machine.

PERFORMANCE

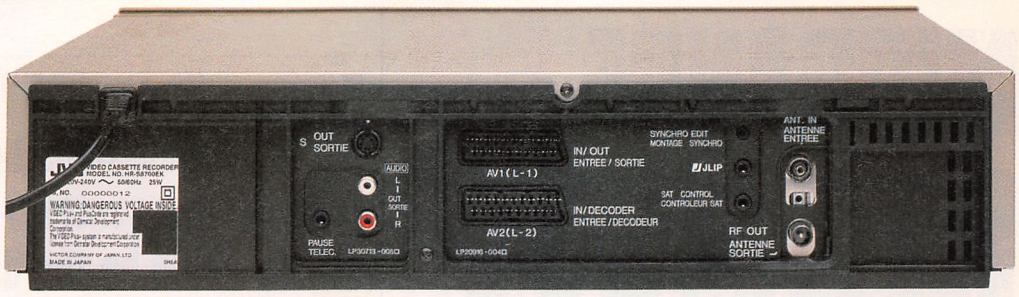
Playback of prerecorded VHS tapes is excellent, while off-air recordings in SP VHS mode look and sound extremely good. Unsurprisingly, the quality drops as you move down the scale to SP and EP recording modes.

S-VHS recording is clean and impressive, but – as with the Panasonic – S-VHS ET recordings made on basic VHS cassettes look muddy and grainy.

Picture quality and stability are aided greatly by the TBC and noise reduction system. Tape transport seems a bit noisy compared to the Panasonic.

Recordings made from high-quality sources such as DV via S-video are excellent, being crisp and clear with excellent colour reproduction. In this respect this VCR – as with the Panasonic NV-HS960 – is an excellent choice for making VHS copies of homemade movies.

The S8700EK's editing abilities prove a mighty letdown, though. Two control interfaces are provided: JLIP and LANC.



An impressive array of sockets strongly favours JVC JLIP gear for video editing

JLIP is JVC's own protocol, normally found only on JVC machines. The company has written linear editing software with full device control for JLIP devices, but neither the software nor the necessary cables are supplied with the deck.

The necessary bits and bobs do come supplied with some JVC camcorders, but we didn't have one handy. The only cam we had to hand was a Sony, which sports a LANC socket. Our linear editing trials were carried out on Panasonic's DV VCR, the NV-DV2000.

This sports a 5-pin edit port and a LANC port, so we figured LANC was the way to go. Not so. The LANC socket is only provided for synchronised recording, where the tape will start recording when an attached camcorder or deck starts playing. This is a great waste of potential, and badly limits the VCR's appeal for the home movie enthusiast.

CONCLUSION

The HR-S8700EK boasts excellent picture and sound quality, and is reasonably easy to use. It has a neat array of features and, for the most part, performs well. The BEST picture system is a pain to use, but this can be disabled if it becomes too much of an irritation.

The price of £320 is a tad high for a general-purpose timeshifting machine, but the dominance of JLIP as the main control interface makes its appeal to the home movie maker a fairly strong one – so long as they own nothing but JVC devices.

Between this model and the Panasonic HS960B, we reckon the JVC wins by a neck given the huge price difference. As for the S-VHS format, we feel that now is the time to be pushing D-VHS as the standard of choice. Rather than continue promoting S-VHS, JVC should learn from its past mistakes and push D-VHS into the mainstream market as soon as possible ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

Video editing application is limited, but great value otherwise

PICTURE	9/10
SOUND	9/10
FEATURES	8/10
EDITING FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	8/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

JVC HR-S8700EK

GUIDE PRICE £320

KEY FEATURES
S-VHS, S-VHS ET & VHS
Nicam stereo
NTSC playback
Linear editing features

WHAT'S GOOD
Picture; sound; TBC and DNR

WHAT'S BAD
Poor use of LANC control; no cover for front AV ports

FEATURES
S-VHS, VHS and S-VHS ET recording and playback; Nicam stereo; hi-fi sound; digital TBC; 3D DNR; four heads; BEST recording system; LANC and JLIP terminals; jog/shuttle on deck; VideoPlus; automatic SP/LP change function; insert edit; audio dub

SOCKETS
Front: S-video in; composite in; L/R stereo audio in
Rear: two Scarts; S-video out; composite out; L/R audio out; RF in/out (coax); JLIP terminal; LANC socket

DIMENSIONS
435(w) x 94(h) x 330(d) mm

TEST DATA
S-VHS ET:
Frequency response at 3.5MHz: -0.0dB (excellent)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -41.0dB (fair)
Chroma AM/PM: -52.1dB/-48.1dB (excellent/excellent)
Jitter: 2ns (excellent)
Dynamic range: excellent
Horizontal resolution: 400 lines
Grain/dot crawl: very good/good

MIDRANGE MARVEL

Buying a Nicam VCR? Want strong AV performance, bags of features and a tape library system? Philips' £240 VR765 could be the deck for you, according to Ian Calcutt

Although the traditional VHS VCR's days are numbered, the format is still hugely popular for timeshifting and playing prerecorded tapes. But after 20 years of VHS production, expectations of new decks are high.

Buyers now demand first-rate build quality and the latest picture improvements, plus added-value features like varied timer options and a way of keeping track of what's on each tape. Step forward Philips who, with its 700 Nicam VCR series, aims to fulfil all of those criteria. Under the spotlight here is Philips' midrange model, the VR765.

DESCRIPTION

This fully featured VCR looks surprisingly minimalist from the front. Styling is chic silver and its buttons are subtle-looking, but these have a squishy response which feels disappointingly cheap. A fully removable (and easy to misplace) panel covers the front AV inputs.

Slightly cluttered in the middle but otherwise compact and user-friendly

At the back are two Scarts, suitable for satellite input and RGB loopthrough (which only takes effect with the VCR in standby). Other connections include stereo audio input for audio dubbing or audio-only hi-fi recording and output.

The remote control is, in the usual Philips fashion, small, neat and well designed. There is, though, some extra clutter around the central menu navigation keys. The handset should also control most TVs.

OPERATION

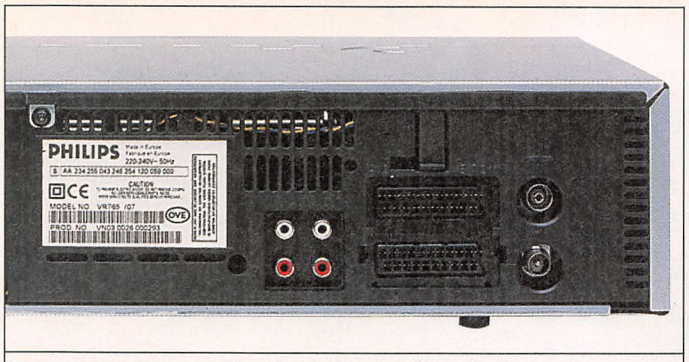
The instruction manual is extensive and perhaps slightly over-explained, but contains help for beginners. Owners of Easy Link-compatible TVs can download channel info into the VCR (as well as make direct-from-TV recordings later). If not, auto tuning takes around 3min 40sec.

Date and time are both set automatically and will adjust to any seasonal clock changes. There are manual overrides for all installation procedures. As an adaptable, European-made VCR, the VR765 can tune to cable TV and also play Secam-format tapes.

Tape Manager is slower than Panasonic's version and can be annoying. It takes several seconds to scan a tape for data and, if it's blank, several more seconds to allocate a new number. Oddly, the cassette is then ejected, even though it's likely to be needed immediately!

Once presented with the list of contents, Tape Manager is as convenient and efficient as most library systems. Data for all tapes is stored in the VCR's memory, so all recording logs can be browsed. In most circumstances, the VR765 will lift the programme name from (analogue terrestrial) broadcasts. This works best with whole rather than partial recordings. Library info can even be downloaded via Scart to another Philips 'TM' VCR.

Trick play and tape navigation features are fairly extensive (see *Specifications*), while rewind time for an E180 is a swift 84sec. Tape length is detected automatically, which is useful



Two Scarts, stereo audio in/out and RF aerial in/out

for accurate use of the auto LP timer/time-remaining counter.

On the downside, according to the manual, long play is regarded as an 'expert user' feature, and has been buried under three levels of onscreen menus. There's no handy remote control key or even front-panel button to select it if recording manually.

"Dynamic range packs a mighty punch"

Sadly, the tape counter can only be displayed on screen during recording, so it's hard to determine how long recordings may have been running without using the TV. Commercial Skip is not an intelligent system like Hitachi's, but simply a 2min jump which can be repeated for longer ad breaks (eg Sky's).

Smart Picture is a fast way of swapping between four picture sharpness settings, although the extreme settings (Soft and Sharp) are only intended for emergencies.

Not to be confused with set-top box control is Satellite Recording. This is a slave mode for STBs with their own timers (ie not Sky digital), and which prompt VCRs to begin recording.

There is no actual STB control, not even analogue or ONdigital. For ordinary timed recordings there are the usual manual and VideoPlus options, though the six-event maximum is paltry. Turbo Timer is a stripped-down version for setting time and channel over a 24hr period. It still requires the handset, but uses the VCR's front-panel LED, not the TV.

Although not bursting with editing features, audio dub is present, with manual audio level control for Scart or phono inputs – which uses the strangely named Manual Mute control on the front panel. For sound-without-picture recording there is an Audio Only mode.

PERFORMANCE

These days we don't expect Philips VCRs to skimp on picture quality, and the VR765 continues this trend. In nearly all respects it delivers about the best possible results with standard VHS.

Dynamic range packs a mighty punch, as does the deck's response to fine detail. Video noise control is excellent, while colour fidelity is beautifully lifelike, with a subtle range not marred by over-saturation or shimmering.

This diminishes a little in LP, but is still impressive. Detail goes down, understandably, in LP and stability is not as steady as in SP. In both modes there's a tendency for frizzy dot crawl on light-coloured edges, which is only disguised in Soft picture mode (too fuzzy for everyday viewing). This is, however, the only disappointing aspect of the VR765's performance.

Sound is well up to the expected quality from a Nicam/hi-fi stereo VCR, with sharp reproduction across the audio spectrum and little background hiss.

CONCLUSION

There's plenty hidden inside the VR765's minimalist casing. Clearly this machine wasn't made for showoffs, but for those who want a traditional-looking VCR added-value features and performance.

Tape Manager works best with analogue terrestrial broadcasts rather than digital satellite. This, plus the lack of set-top box control, makes the VR765 most suited to terrestrial-only viewers who want fine picture quality and generous specifications, without the expense of S-VHS or the complication of some high-end VCRs ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

A solid mid-to-high-range VCR

PICTURE	9/10
SOUND	8/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	7/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

PHILIPS VR765

GUIDE PRICE £240

KEY FEATURES

Nicam stereo
VideoPlus/PDC/Turbo Timer
Tape Manager
Easy Link
NTSC playback

WHAT'S GOOD

Picture quality; feature count

WHAT'S BAD

No satellite or digibox control; some operational foibles

FEATURES

Nicam stereo; four video heads; long play; auto-LP timer; onscreen display; auto setup; multiband tuner (including CATV); Easy Link; trick play (two-speed forward & reverse search, reverse play, three-speed forward slo mo); six-event, one-month timer with overlap warning; VideoPlus; PDC; Turbo Timer; Tape Manager (version II); 16:9 detect; index search; blank search; audio dubbing with auto/manual level control; Commercial Skip; NTSC playback in PAL60; time-remaining counter; Secam playback; black & white mode; Crystal Clear Video and SMART Picture improvement; auto head cleaner; auto standby on/off; demo mode; LED display on/off; VCR 1 & 2 handset mode; child lock; multibrand TV remote

SOCKETS

Front: composite video in (phono); stereo audio in (phonos)
Rear: two Scarts (with RGB loopthrough); stereo audio input/output (phonos); RF aerial in/out

DIMENSIONS

435(w) x 290(d) x 93(h)mm

CONTACT

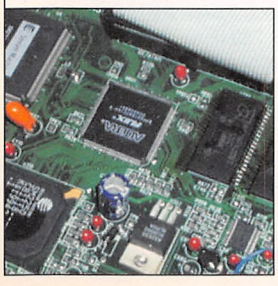
Philips ☎ 020 8665 6350
www.philips.com

TEST DATA

Resolution: 250 lines
Dynamic range: excellent
Grain/dot crawl: very good/average
Frequency response at 3.5MHz: -0.2dB (excellent)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -46.1dB (very good)
Chroma AM/PM: -51.5dB/-46.4dB (excellent/excellent)
Jitter: 288ns (excellent)

OPTICAL RISK?

The circuitry which is causing a furore in the DVD world



Mico Electric plans to sell a twin-deck Video CD recorder with direct dubbing from DVD. Is this a pirate's dream or the ultimate tool for camcorder archiving? Bob Tomalski talks exclusively to Mico's marketing manager, Steve Leung

In our August issue, *What Video & TV* exclusively revealed that a Chinese company was set to launch an affordable alternative to recordable DVD. Mico Electric of Shenzhen demonstrated a VDR (video disc recorder) that can make Video CD and Super Video CD recordings on regular CD-R/CD-RW computer blank media. Using MPEG1 and MPEG2 the VDR could capture around 1hr of VHS-quality recordings, or 40min of S-VHS quality on discs that cost under £1.50. Mico also revealed that it had a technical solution which could double these recording times in future.

Too good to be true vapourware? Mico supplied us with a working prototype for test purposes. We reported it functioned perfectly, although occasionally suffered from lip-sync defects. We were told that the VDR would go into mass-production and launch in Asia by Christmas, then in Europe by early 2001, priced at under £500. Contrast this with the expected £2,000 for a recordable DVD deck.

Now *What Video & TV* can exclusively reveal that Mico has changed its plans and will release a twin-deck version of the VDR. One mechanism will play regular DVDs. The other will record Video CD/Super Video CD. The deck will dub from DVD to VCD regardless of region code or TV standard. This news comes as video accessories specialist Holdan has begun selling a similar product made by Datavideo (full review expected in the next issue).

Is this the unacceptable face of the Chinese copy culture, or the greatest camcorder archiving tool ever invented? Recently Steve Leung, Mico's international marketing manager, told us of his company's plans.

WV

What is the latest on your VDR? Will you release it in China, as you told us before?

Mico

The VDR we showed you used an MPEG encoder/decoder from a US company called Stream Machine. But support from Stream Machine was disappointing. We are now working on an alternative VDR using a solution from C-Cube. We plan a machine, or maybe a number of designs, with DVD playback and VCD/S-VCD recording. This will be a twin deck that plays DVDs and allows dubbing to VCDs via regular computer blank discs.

This machine will have mass-market interest. Because of economies of scale and the fact that the same chipset is used for DVD and VCD recording, we can introduce it at the same price as our previously planned VDR-only [no DVD playback] deck. I think it will sell at under £500 in the UK.

WV

Will your VDR twin deck include a tuner for making TV recordings?

Mico

I doubt it. We want to bring this to market as soon as possible at the lowest cost possible, and to fit a tuner would delay things. We see this as being a deck designed for recording your own discs from a camcorder and for dubbing from CD or VCD and DVD. It's not really designed for timeshifting.

WV

Don't you think that a deck designed for copying DVDs will attract the wrath of Hollywood? Don't you fear legal action to stop its sale?

Mico

We make no apologies for its ability to produce duplicates. It's for making copies of CDs, DVDs, VCDs, etc. But how does it differ from a tape deck or a VCR or PC with a capture card and CD-writer? Or how does it differ from CD recording twin decks already released by Philips and others? They are not illegal.

We are providing a device for home use, not a tool for mass-copying by software pirates. It's not practical or economical for those companies to use such a machine to make copies. So we don't see any political issue, any more than with a regular VCR.

"We are providing a device for home use, not a tool for software pirates"

In my view consumers should have the right to make VCDs and S-VCDs for personal use. If they then sell those discs at a car boot sale, it's illegal. We don't condone that, but our machine is not to blame. It's their law-breaking intent, not ours.

WV

One disadvantage of the VCD and Super VCD format is the recording time. You told us before that double-density recording would increase the capacity. Will the twin-deck VDR have that feature?

Mico

That depends on the availability of double-density recording drives. Production is a bit slower than originally expected, so we shall probably launch the twin-deck VDR with a conventional CD-writer. Either way, we plan to sell this product in the UK first because we have had such a positive reaction from existing customers. Even our OEM customers – High Street brands – have shown interest in this device, which is a bit surprising given that the UK is not big on VCDs.

WV

Your DVD-A980 player, marketed online via Unbeatable, has been highly popular. Will you introduce a new machine for the Christmas season?

Mico

Our DVD-A980 has been received very well. But there are some improvements to be made. We plan a version with an RGB-equipped Scart and a standby function rather than the existing mains power on/off. We also plan a bigger fluorescent display and a more attractive front panel. Overall it will look more upmarket than today's product, but the price will stay the same.

We also plan a model for OEM sale with a stripped-down spec. It will not play CD-R/RW discs, but will feature MP3 decoding, mainly because this feature is standard on the decoding chipset. We would expect this OEM model to sell for £150 or even less.

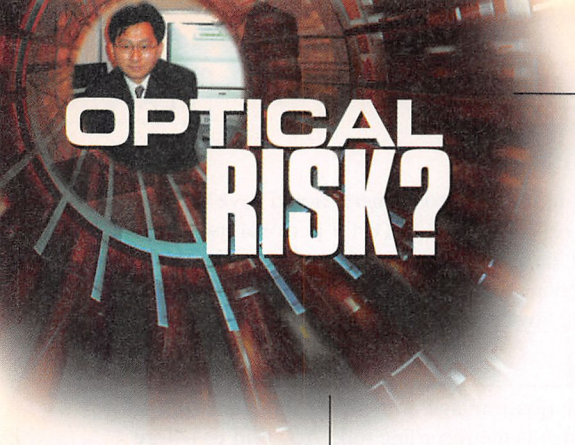
WV

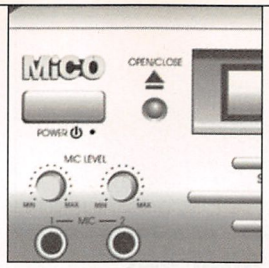
Will we see a £99 DVD player from Mico soon?

Mico

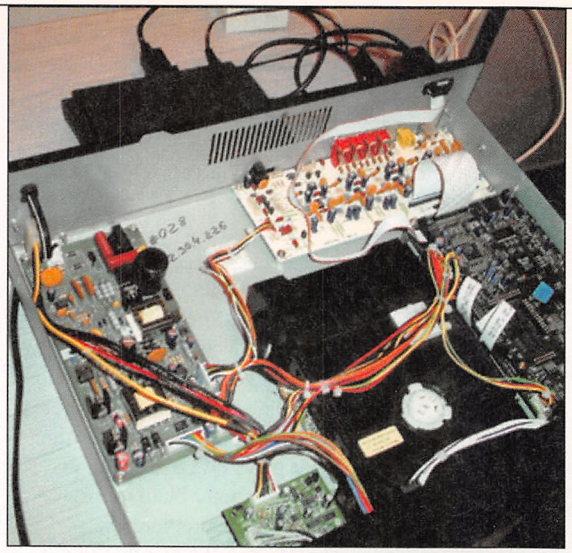
No. I don't see how we can make a machine at that price yet. Of course, things change. We are looking to make our own servo mechanisms ➤

Mico's twin deck will make S-VCD recordings of DVD movies. Due on sale in 2001 for under £500





Above and right: inside Mico's VDR machine



"In the future we may see an entire DVD player on a chip"

◀ which means we will construct the transport ourselves. Another cost-reducing move will come in conjunction with C-cube, in the form of an MPEG decoder and servo all on one board. In the future we may see an entire DVD player on a chip. Just connect the drive mechanism for an instant DVD player. When all that comes on stream a player might fall to £99, but not yet.

WV

We heard rumours that you would also introduce a DVD deck which plays Sega games?

Mico

We did plan this but have had second thoughts. In Hong Kong, a competitor [Shinco] has launched a DVD player with Sega games compatibility, but

Mico's original VDR deck has been shelved in favour of the DVD/VDR twin deck

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it's not selling. We have more important things to do right now.

WV

Do you have any plans to introduce an affordable portable DVD player?

Mico

The new C-Cube Ziva 5 chipset reduces the number of components and complexity of the player. So we can design a portable DVD player much more easily. We are planning a project with a major Japanese manufacturer to make portable DVD players in China. These would use a high-quality 8in TFT display and slimline 7mm loading mechanism. There will also be another version without a screen, and probably a version for use in the car, maybe rear seat-mounted.

The idea is to offer these players as OEM products for export, and also for sale in Asia. It could force a price reduction in the market, where portables have always seemed overpriced compared with home decks.

WV

Finally, I'd like to touch on the issue of regional coding. Will you continue to ship code-free players?

Mico

We go with what our customers – the distributors – in each country want. We will ship the region codes that we are asked to ship ❐

MICO'S WEB-SURFING DVD PLAYER

Mico intends to launch a DVD player with internet access. It will play movies, CDs and even homemade MP3 discs, plus sporting both Web browser and email facilities.

Steve Leung explains: 'Research shows that DVD is becoming as common in people's homes as the VCR. Every house will have one. The internet is also an essential part of people's lives. So we came up with a new concept, called iDVD. It will be aimed at those who want internet without the complexity of a PC.

'You can either select DVD playback or internet use. Or if a DVD has website addresses embedded in the software, the player will then access those URLs automatically.

'We showed the concept at the Live 2000 show in London, and had a great reaction from the public and prospective distributors. What we plan is a highly specified model with the CD-R/RW functions of the DVD-A980, but with internet access as an added bonus.

'It will be slightly more expensive [than a DVD-A980], but not hugely so. We also think it might be taken up by ISPs looking for a way of marketing their service. What better promotion? A free DVD player if you subscribe for a year. Look out for it next summer.'

Mico's internet-capable DVD player will be based on its popular DVD-A980 (left)

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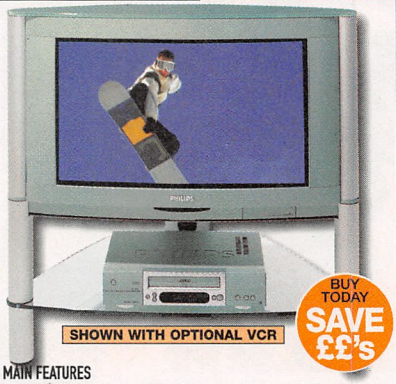
PHILIPS 32PW9523



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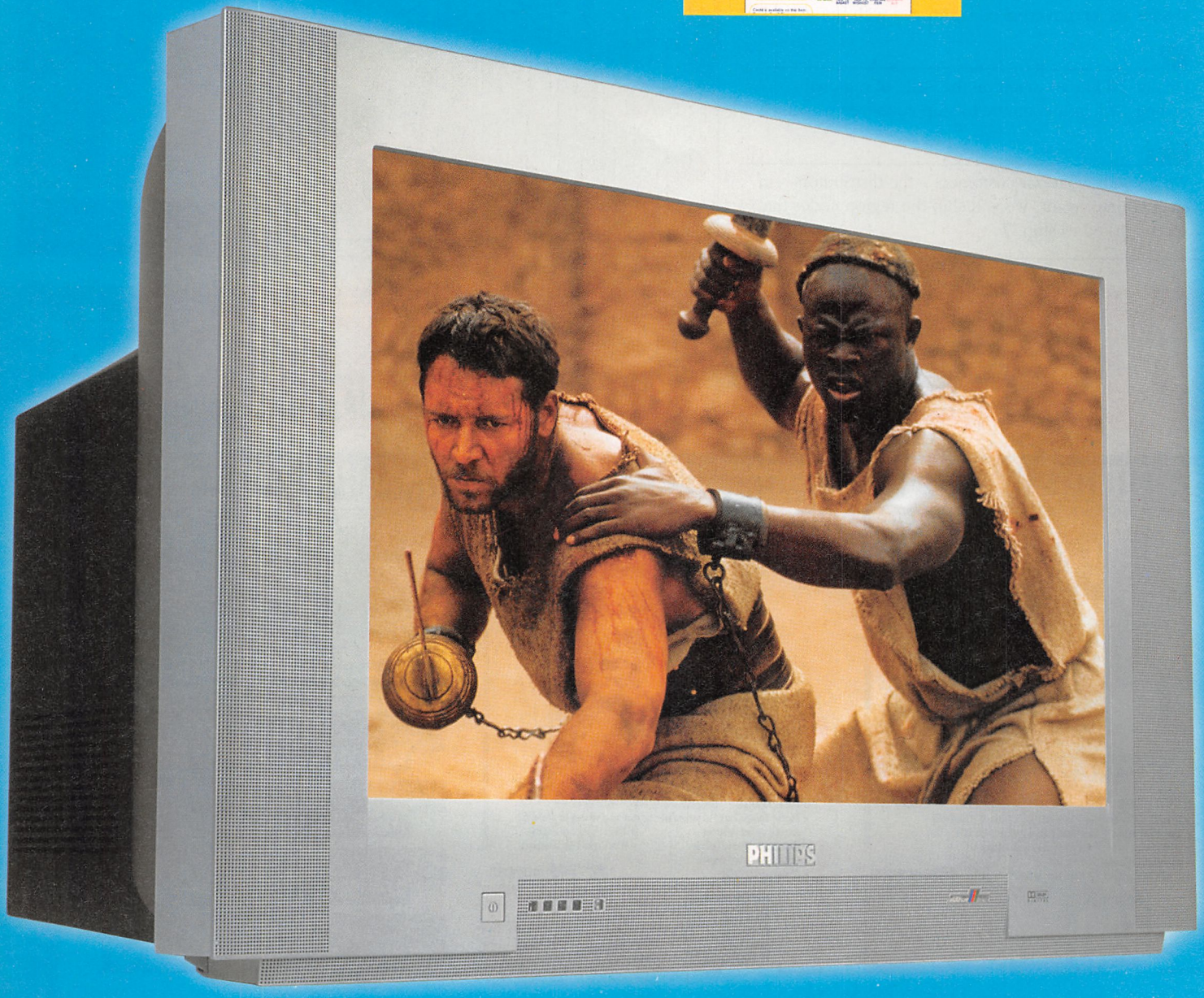

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WIN A £1,250 PHILIPS TV WITH UNBEATABLE.CO.UK

Once again we have joined forces with Unbeatable.co.uk, the UK's premier audiovisual 'e-tailer', to bring you another great competition. This month we have a superb Philips 32PW9616 32in widescreen TV and cabinet to be won, worth £1,247.

Awarded a Best Buy in our October '00 review, the 32PW9616 is the perfect partner for DVD playback with its 32in flatscreen and built-in Dolby Digital surround sound.

Other features include 100Hz Digital Scan and Natural Motion, FM wireless rear speakers, NTSC compatibility, auto tuning and NexTView/Easy Link.

Among the set's many sockets are four Scarts (two RGB, one S-video), coaxial digital input, side-mounted AV inputs and 5.1 channel audio line outs. We loved the 32PW9616 for its knockout picture and sound performance. We think you'll love it too.

Unbeatable is backed by the Capital Sound & Vision group, which began in 1976 to specialise in photographic equipment. Today it operates several stores and a mail-order operation. Now it has also expanded to the internet with the renowned Unbeatable site, which offers bargain prices for a wide range of audiovisual and electronic gear including cameras, TVs, hi-fi, DVD and personal audio.

Unbeatable checks its prices daily with its High Street and online rivals to bring you the best deals. It will beat any genuine lower advertised price (within the UK) by 10 per cent of the price difference. See for yourself at www.unbeatable.co.uk.

Orders can be taken by fax, post, phone or online with a credit card using Unbeatable's secure server. The site has been awarded Web Trader status by the Consumer's Association for its customer care service.

To be in with a chance of winning one of these magnificent sets, simply answer the question correctly and complete the entry form below ❐

THE QUESTION

The Philips 32PW9616 sports which audio system?

A: Dolby Digital
B: Dolby Discrete
C: Dolby Display

RULES OF ENTRY

1. The editor's decision is final
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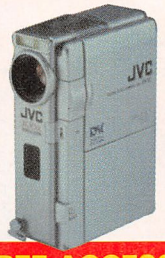

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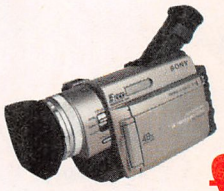

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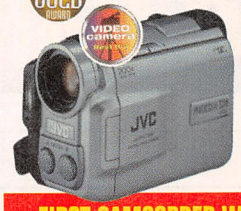

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NEXT MONTH IN WHAT VIDEO & TV

THE AWARDS ISSUE

It's the time when we reflect on the flood of gear which has passed through the hands of our expert reviewing team over the last 12 months. We select the best TVs, VCRs, DVD players, camcorders and AV equipment of the year. You'd be a fool to miss it!

HOME CINEMA HEAVEN
Prepare to drool over Denon's £2,500 flagship DTS-ES 6.1-channel receiver and Seleco's £7,000 HT200 LCD projector

HOME THEATRE DVD MEETS PC
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(Contents subject to change)

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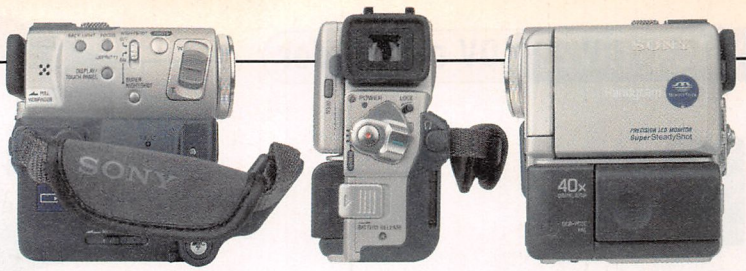

Sony's €1,100 DCR-PC5 is so small it needs a touch-sensitive LCD screen to work it. Adrian Justins gets touchy-feely

Camcorder makers have striven to shrink their models into pocket-sized packages. After all, even the tiniest DV camcorder makes superior recordings to bigger, better-specified analogue cams. But with miniaturisation comes problems.

Concerns over ease of use come to the fore, as the surface area required to house the many controls needed to operate today's sophisticated little machines disappears.

The PC5, which is Sony's most compact model yet, employs an obvious way round this problem – a touch-sensitive menu system. But will Sony's effort prove a good solution?

DESCRIPTION & OPERATION

The PC5 sports many of Sony's usual DV camcorder features, including a Carl Zeiss lens with 10x optical zoom, full manual exposure and focus overrides, and Memory Stick digital still storage medium. The 4Mb Stick supplied can store up to 60 standard VGA images or 40 Fine-mode images.

The mic is top-mounted, and worryingly located near to the zoom lever, where there's a danger of picking up operation noises. Where JVC and Panasonic often opt for docking stations Sony squeezes everything onto the camcorder, including the AV sockets, headphones jack and external mic input.

> *"A triumph of miniaturisation"*

Only a few controls have external buttons, including the on/off record switch. Most other functions are operated via the LCD touchscreen monitor. When in record mode, to access the menu you press function and are shown a page which offers control of the fader, digital picture effects, manual exposure and more menu options.

Simply press the function you want and the screen changes. It's a real cinch to use, and in fact it's a damn sight easier than the ubiquitous thumbwheel device normally used to operate camcorder menu systems.

Sony may have felt compelled to incorporate a touch-operated system in the PC5, but we'd be happy if it appeared on camcorder screens as regularly as Carol Vorderman does on TV screens.

There are a few downsides, though. Battery consumption is higher and most menu functions can't be operated when using the pullout viewfinder instead of the LCD screen.

At least you can still use basic exposure controls with the screen flipped over, when it blacks out to save power. The other problem is one of grubby fingerprint marks on the screen.

Because the PC5 is so slight it comes with a handgrip attachment. It's rather ugly but ergonomically spot on, and enables much easier operation.

PERFORMANCE

You rarely see a bad image from a DV camcorder these days and the PC5 is no different. Pictures are bright and highly detailed, while colours are true and bleed is non-apparent.

The auto focus works well except in low light, when it hunts for a sharp image. Audio is a disappointment. Motor noise is prevalent and the microphone lacks forward directionality.

Also of concern is the viewfinder, which is small and insufficiently clear to use when making manual adjustments.

CONCLUSION

The PC5 is a triumph of miniaturisation. The touch-operated menu works fantastically and the cam is essentially a joy to use. The trade-off is a performance that falls marginally short of Sony's normally faultless standards ❐

VERDICT

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PICTURE	9/10
SOUND	7/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	9/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

SONY DCR-PC5

GUIDE PRICE.....£1,100

WHAT'S GOOD
Touch-operated menu; compact and bijou

WHAT'S BAD
Audio performance

FEATURES
¼in CCD; 1.7 lens with 3.3-33mm focal length (10x optical/40x digital zoom); 30mm filter diameter; PCM stereo sound; auto/manual focus, shutter, white balance and exposure; seven Program AE modes; 12 digital picture effects; seven fade modes; 2.5in LCD monitor; colour viewfinder; 4Mb Memory Stick; Picture Gear 4.1Lite software; SteadyShot; Super NightShot; audio dub; timecode; 20-scene edit controller

SOCKETS
DV out; S-video out; composite video out; LANC; external mic; headphones; DC in

DIMENSIONS
54(w) x 101(h) x 97(d)mm

WEIGHT
0.51kg (inc battery & tape)

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TEST DATA
Frequency response (S-video) at 4MHz: -7.48dB (excellent)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -55.2dB (exc)
Jitter: 6ns (good)
Chroma AM/PM: -48.6dB/-dB (excellent/excellent)
Chroma crosstalk: -49.3dB (good)
Horizontal resolution: 500 lines
Dot crawl/grain: none/none

BIG SHOT

£1,500 is a hefty sum for a single-CCD camcorder. Jason Greening discovers whether Sony's DCR-TRV20 is worth digging deep for

The TRV20 is Sony's current flagship single-CCD DV cam. Diehard enthusiasts and professionals might be tempted to seek out a three-CCD model, but for most amateur applications the specification on offer here should prove sufficient.

Although it sports Sony's Memory Stick still image storage medium and a megapixel CCD, you only have to glance at the TRV20's weight and dimensions to see that this is essentially a movie-making machine and not a pocket-sized stills/video combi.

DESCRIPTION & OPERATION

As you'd expect from Sony, this is a well-built cam, which shows all the outward signs of a well-featured model. The 10x optical zoom lens is encased in a silver hood with an easily accessed manual focusing ring. The ring and zoom rocker both work brilliantly, with just the right amount of damping and response.

The tape housing is beneath the camcorder, which is a major inconvenience if you need to change tapes when using a tripod. The other main design foible is the positioning of several functions on the inside of the LCD screen, including the menu, digital effects and title buttons. This means you can't shoot only using the viewfinder (eg in bright light) and access these features at the same time.

> *"Audio is about as good as you can get"*

The 3.5in LCD screen is the biggest yet from Sony, which somewhat spoils the look of the model compared with neater 2.5in versions found elsewhere.

The cam sports Sony's proven menu system and includes one or two neat enhancements. It's easy to switch from one white balance setting to another, and digital effects can be left until playback. Exposure and shutter control are, as you'd expect, automatic or manual, but audio is auto only.

At least the stereo mic is front-mounted, which provides better pickup than top-mounted ones and allows for an accessory shoe to go on the top.

As Sony aims for a Memory Stick-dominated world, the TRV20 naturally comes with a 4Mb card, loaded with 20 decorative borders and effects. These can be combined with moving images and recorded onto tape. The cam also takes XGA resolution (1,152 x 864 pixel) stills, which can be downloaded to a PC using the supplied software.

The TRV20 scores highly in terms of connectivity. It can record from analogue sources such as VHS VCRs or Hi8 cams, and has i.Link DV in. This is essential for anyone wanting to shoot on DV, edit on a PC and export back out to DV, remaining digital throughout.

PERFORMANCE

The TRV20's single-CCD and Carl Zeiss lens combine to deliver excellent images, which are dynamic and full of clarity. Resolution is a full 520 lines, while colours are reproduced accurately without bleed. The auto focus system copes perfectly, even in low light, while the image stabiliser does its job without impairing the quality of the image. As our lab tests bear out, the TRV20 does a first-rate job.

Usually the Achilles' heel of DV cams, audio is about as good as you can get via the built-in mic. The dynamic range is broad, although treble sounds are susceptible to clipping. Motor noise isn't a noticeable problem.

CONCLUSION

The TRV20 is a worthy addition to the DV range. Although a tad awkward to work with, it is a pleasure to use for everyday shooting and, most importantly, it delivers excellent results. Not quite in the league of the three-CCD machines, but the TRV20 represents the best you can expect from a single-chip camcorder ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

Superbly built and well specified, the TRV20 makes magical movies

PICTURE	9/10
SOUND	9/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	9/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

SONY DCR-TRV20

GUIDE PRICE.....£1,500

WHAT'S GOOD
Excellent performance; build quality

WHAT'S BAD
Tape access via underside of cam; some functions only accessible with LCD screen open

FEATURES
¼in CCD; 1.8 lens with 4.2-42mm focal length (10x optical/40x digital zoom); 37mm filter diameter; PCM stereo sound; auto/manual focus, shutter, white balance and exposure; seven Program AE modes; 3.5in LCD monitor; colour viewfinder; 4Mb Memory Stick; Picture Gear 4.1Lite software; SteadyShot; Super NightShot; playback zoom; audio dub; insert edit; timecode

SOCKETS
DV in/out; analogue line in; S-video out; composite video out; LANC; external mic; headphones; digital still out

DIMENSIONS
71(w) x 93(h) x 170(d)mm

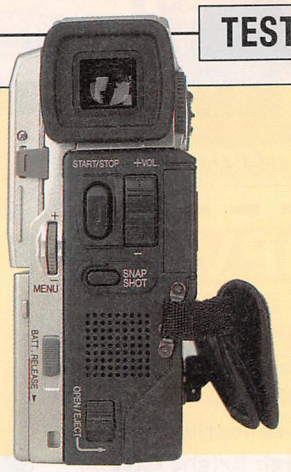
WEIGHT
0.62kg (inc battery & tape)

CONTACT
Sony ☎ 0990 111999
www.sony.co.uk

TEST DATA
Frequency response (S-video) at 4MHz: -7.21dB (excellent)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -52.6dB (excellent)
Jitter: 3ns (very good)
Chroma AM/PM: -47.3dB/-47.4dB (excellent/very good)
Chroma crosstalk: -48.2dB (v good)
Horizontal resolution: 520 lines
Dot crawl/grain: none/none

FUTURE SHOCK

JVC has launched the first DV cam to use MP3 files for sound effects. Adrian Justins assesses the feature-laden and groundbreaking £1,200 GR-DVX9



JVC has a reputation for producing feature-laden camcorders. Every year the company dreams up new functions which it crams into its models, leaving other manufacturers in its wake.

This year is no different, with the GR-DVX9 among the first camcorders capable of taking sound effects from a MultiMediaCard and recording them onto DV tape. And, like most other digital cams, the DVX9 is also being touted as a digital stills camera, capable of recording XGA-resolution stills and even sporting a built-in flash gun.

Supplied as standard is a host of PC and Mac software which facilitates still image manipulation and camcorder device control, but this model doesn't sport an i.Link DV input. For that you need the more expensive but otherwise identical DVX10.

DESCRIPTION & OPERATION

These upright book-style cams may be smaller and sexier-looking than traditional lengthways models, but the design has inherent flaws. The human hand does not naturally wrap around this shape of camcorder, which makes positioning the cam a fiddly and uncomfortable business.

Compounding the problem is the tiny rocker/push button on the rear panel. Not only is this fiddly and too sensitive, it leads you to a convoluted menu system that could easily be a *Krypton Factor* challenge.

> **"A decent DV camcorder"**

JVC has packed in so many functions that the only way many of them can be accessed is by a multilayered menu system in combination with dual-function buttons. JVC would argue that it's better to have the option of various functions, but the operating system is not as user-friendly as it could have been.

The compact size also has another disadvantage. The headphones socket is located on a separate docking station along with the AV inputs, which isn't much use for monitoring sound when shooting on location.

The DVX9's lens is standard stuff, with a minimum focal length of 3.8mm. This gives a reasonably wide angle of view and a 10x optical zoom. There's also a 200x digital zoom, which beyond 30x is useful for nothing other than creating Picasso-style images and for dodgy shop assistants who use it as a major selling point.

JVC has given the DVX9 a progressive-scan CCD, which effectively allows you to grab blur-free still frames from moving video footage. Curiously, when it comes to exposure control JVC has eschewed the normal form of manual overrides by ditching the Program AE modes.

Instead it has incorporated a couple of shutter speeds into the digital effects menu and offered an exposure override plus a backlight compensation mode.

The aforementioned MMC card is supplied with 12 sound effects, and further sounds are available for download from the JVC website. The MMC card can also be used to record email clips. As ever, JVC leads the way in producing multimedia convergence products.

PERFORMANCE

The DVX9 is a decent DV performer, coping admirably with most lighting situations. The exposure system sometimes struggles to catch up when the light changes dramatically, but then most shooting is performed in consistent conditions.

Colour reproduction is faithful, while contrast and brightness meet the DV standard. Detail is fine if perhaps not quite as good as some rival machines we've seen. It's pleasing to report that the auto focus system is accurate and responsive, with none of the hunting problems witnessed on previous JVC DV cams.

Sound recording is a mixed bag. Quality is decent but the top-mounted mic struggles to match the direction of the lens.

CONCLUSION

A likeable little machine which delivers decent enough results. The DVX9 may prove a tad too fiddly for some, but there's no doubting its impressive feature count ❐

VERDICT

Great spec, decent results but a fiddly little fellow to get to grips with

PICTURE	8/10
SOUND	7/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	7/10
OVERALL	8/10

SPECIFICATIONS

JVC GR-DVX9

GUIDE PRICE.....£1,200

WHAT'S GOOD
Specification; decent performance

WHAT'S BAD
Fixed viewfinder; fiddly operation

FEATURES
¼in progressive scan CCD; 1.8 lens with 3.8-38mm focal length (10x optical/200x digital zoom); 27mm filter diameter; PCM stereo sound; auto/manual focus, shutter, white balance and exposure; seven digital effects; digital image stabiliser; 2.5in LCD monitor; colour viewfinder; MultiMediaCard; Picture Navigator and JLIP video editing software; eight-scene RA edit mode; audio dub; timecode; built-in flash, email clip record

SOCKETS
DV out; S-video out; composite video out; JLIP; headphones

DIMENSIONS
50(w) x 125(h) x 100(d)mm

WEIGHT
0.6kg (inc battery & tape)

CONTACT
JVC ☎ 020 8208 7654
www.jvc.co.uk

TEST DATA
Frequency response (S-video) at 4MHz: -12.45dB (fair)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -42.25dB (very good)
Jitter: 6ns (good)
Chroma AM/PM: -47.2dB/-44.2dB (excellent/very good)
Chroma crosstalk: -48.11dB (v good)
Horizontal resolution: 490 lines
Dot crawl/grain: none/none

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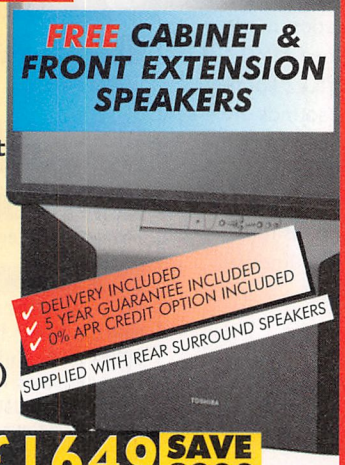

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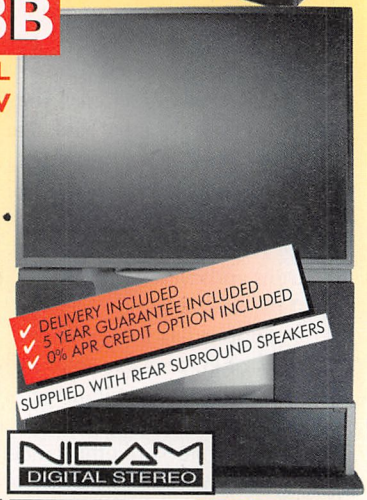

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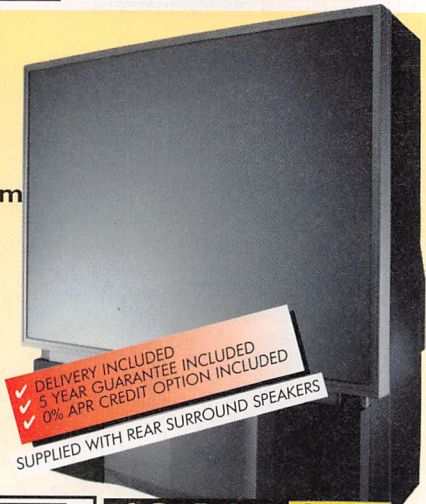

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CANNY CANS

Wireless headphones are ideal for late-night listening/viewing. But which should you choose? Ian Calcutt recommends the £120 Sennheiser RS60

With even computer networks going wireless it's easy to forget that humble headphones have been part of the cordless revolution for quite some time. However, it has still proved difficult to find good ones. Many now offer superb value for money, but can be marred by poor reception.

Germany's Sennheiser has a third-generation range of 863MHz RF headphones, which begins with the £80 RS40 and the £120 RS60. The main difference is the addition of Virtual Surround sound on the latter.

DESCRIPTION

The RS60 phones are made of black, lightweight plastic with large cups to fit over the entire ear. Velvet-effect pads cushion around the ear for additional comfort. The transmitter unit is a sleek module with a shark-fin type aerial moulded into a flat base. Indicator LEDs for power/charge, input signal and surround are visible but unintrusive.

OPERATION

Setting up is simple, with two cables, power and an audio input that connect to the transmitter. Audio connection is by 3.5mm headphone minijack (a full-size 6.35mm jack adaptor is also supplied). To plug a pair of phono leads into the unit you'll need to purchase your own two-phono to 3.5mm socket adaptor.

To charge, the phones are simply placed onto the transmitter's base (no extra leads to worry about). Unlike Vivanco's FMH 7780 (reviewed in our June '00 issue), there's no indicator for remaining-charge time. Before using for the first time, the battery must be charged for 24hr.

Battery life is around 4hr (when it expires, it does so immediately without warning). Regular recharge time is about 14hr. The RS60 takes longer to charge and lasts for less time than Vivanco's equivalent. A spare battery can, however, be charged and kept ready for emergencies.

The range is 50-100m depending on the number of walls, floors, trees or other obstructions. Switchable channels provide a lessening of interference by other RF devices.

One quibble is the headset controls, such as the fiddly on/off button, the lack of a power indicator and the easily muddled up volume and tuning dials.

> *"The lack of hiss and interference makes this system a winner"*

PERFORMANCE

We've grown used to expecting a certain amount of hiss and raspy high frequencies on RF headphones, but there's little of that with the RS60 system. Frequency response is impressive, with decent bass and high-frequency reproduction, plus a wonderfully robust signal that's very hard to lose, no matter how much you wander around.

The SRS Headphone Surround is relatively effective. Surround encoded Nicam TV material (eg *Star Trek: Voyager*) proved surprisingly multidimensional during testing.

The lack of hiss and interference makes this system a winner. Volume can be boosted to a fairly high level before unwanted noise becomes a problem.

CONCLUSION

Comfortable, lightweight, easy to set up and first-rate in operation, this latest generation of wireless phones is the best yet, so good you'd almost think they were digital, not analogue RF. The only downsides are the controls and lengthy recharge time ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

Hiss-free and simple operation make these cans worth their price

LOOKS	9/10
SOUND	10/10
RANGE	9/10
POWER	7/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

SENNHEISER RS60

GUIDE PRICE £120

WHAT'S GOOD
Comfortable design; sound quality

WHAT'S BAD
Fiddly controls; long recharge time

FEATURES
Lightweight, cordless FM headphones; 20Hz-20kHz frequency response; SRS Headphone virtual surround; 863MHz UHF transmission with max 100m range; 4hr operation; switchable transmitting frequencies; integrated battery-charging unit;

SOCKETS
Transmitter: dedicated DC and audio inputs

CABLES
Connecting lead with 3.5mm jack (plus 6.35mm adaptor); charging cable

WEIGHT
160g (headphones and battery)

CONTACT
Sennheiser ☎ 0800 652 5002
www.sennheiser.co.uk

DVD-A DELIGHT

Technics' SC-HDA710/SC-HDX3 combi is the UK's first DVD-Audio mini system. John Archer gets ready to bin his CD player

Now here's something you don't see every day. Not only is the Technics SC-HDA710/SC-HDX3 combi a DVD-Audio player, it's also a mini system complete with tape deck, tuner module and – blimey! – a full set of five satellite speakers.

This raises two questions. First, are the benefits of DVD-Audio over CD still apparent via an integrated system like this rather than from a high-end separates system?

Second, has the inclusion of a DVD-Video player in an audio mini system compromised the video performance?

DESCRIPTION

The HDA710 is a looker. Its four components – DVD player, stereo amp, tuner, tape deck – all sit atop each other to make a delightfully compact, pleasantly metallic little pile that gives little indication of the next-generation talents it offers.

The HDX3 three-channel secondary amp module (for driving the centre and rear speakers) spoils things a bit by having to stand at the side of the main stack, but it's still an attractive bit of kit.

The speakers are pretty too, wearing a light wood finish and grey-black grilles, with the front ones bearing side-firing woofer ports for handling bass channels.

Much of the socketry on this Technics combi is merely for joining together all the components, and needs no further explanation. What you do need to know, though, is that while there are no Scarts, there are both composite and S-video outputs.

There are also six outputs for piping decoded 5.1-channel audio to an external amp system should you decide that the HDA710 is insufficient. In the configuration we're testing here, the centre and rear channel outputs pipe audio to the HDX3 section.

Remote control
Reasonably attractive and surprisingly easy to use

The final point of interest is that the front left/right speakers are connected to the HDA710 unit by a triple-wire system that delivers the high, medium and low frequencies separately.

OPERATION

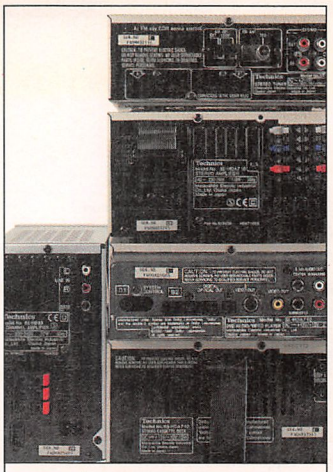
Given its potential complexity, this Technics mini system is surprisingly easy to handle. The remote doesn't overload you with tiny buttons, and although there is a dreaded Shift button system, it's only needed for a couple of things – though these include, sadly, calling up the setup menu. This is the tried and trusted one found on Panasonic's DVD players (borrowed by stablemate Technics). A little more long-winded than some, it's nevertheless easy to follow.

But this is partly because the system isn't exactly brimful of DVD features beyond those already covered. You can set up the relative volumes/distances of your speakers, and can choose whether to play back NTSC discs in PAL60 or pure NTSC format. Otherwise, it's very much business as usual.

PERFORMANCE

Technics helpfully sent us a couple of DVD-Audio discs to assist us with our test. This is just as well, since genuine 192kHz discs are scarce. There are a number of discs available which cheat by 'repeating' 48kHz data four times.

The first good news is that this Technics system clearly demonstrates that DVD-A is better than CD. Of course, the advantages would be more



So much sophistication for one so small

pronounced on a speaker and amp system costing thousands of pounds, but it's important to DVD-A's mass-market potential that it sounds patently superior to CD on a convenience system like this.

The soundstage really does have exceptional clarity and transparency, sounding many notches higher on the audiophile scale than most standard mini-systems.

Bass isn't handled quite as impressively as the high end, but the DVD-A sound is still clearly fuller than ordinary CD. The system particularly comes into its own in 96kHz, five-channel mode, with the rear and centre speakers blending in beautifully to bring a new dimension to music recordings.

Listening to *Men in Black,* we were gobsmacked to hear details and subtleties we'd never heard before. The only problem is that while the system has the power to really step on the gas during a big movie moment, it can actually push things a bit far.

"The soundstage has exceptional clarity and transparency"

Let's give credit where it's due, though. The speakers with the HDA710 are highly impressive, having the power to present at least some of DVD-A's fuller frequencies.

This makes the transition from a quiet moment to a sudden onset of action rather shocking – not least because the speakers sound a tad cramped for range and thus harsh when the volume level ramps up. But it's still a terrific effort for an integrated system at this price.

DVD pictures are absolutely no cause for alarm. Although some of our lab tests indicate excessive picture noise, this doesn't materialise during normal viewing. Images look dynamic, smooth, and sharp as a new pin.

CONCLUSION

Bad news first: the quality of the speakers with this Technics system will not give audiophiles the full benefit of DVD-Audio. But the system *is* good enough for DVD-Audio to sound better than CD. And it's also good enough to make movies look and sound superb.

Furthermore, the fact that it offers full multichannel audio is crucial. While audiophiles will love the extra sonic prowess of DVD-A in pure stereo, the most important aspect of DVD-A for the mass market will be the format's potential to play that latest Spice Girls album in gorgeous 5.1-channel surround. And when that day dawns, there will be few more attractive all-in-one solutions around than this ❐

VERDICT

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

An elegant, reasonably priced way in to the joys of DVD-Audio

PICTURE	9/10
SOUND	9/10
FEATURES	8/10
EASE OF USE	9/10
OVERALL	9/10

SPECIFICATIONS

TECHNICS SC-HDA710/ SC-HDX3 COMBI

GUIDE PRICE.....£1,200

KEY FEATURES

DVD-Audio decoding
DTS/Dolby Digital decoding
Surround sound speakers
NTSC playback

WHAT'S GOOD

DVD-Audio; pictures; looks

WHAT'S BAD

Strident movie volume transients; no RGB; no CD-R/RW playback

FEATURES

Built-in Dolby Digital/DTS/ DVD-Audio; 5-bookmark memory; multiangles; parental lock; aspect ratio selection; PAL60/pure NTSC playback; dialogue booster; 5-speed slo mo; 5-speed picture search; dynamic range compression; RDS FM/AM tuner with 39 presets; (15W x 10W x 5W) x 2 RMS; Eco mode; Rec, Play, Sleep audio timers; cassette deck; DNR; random play; DVD-A-disc still picture select; virtual surround sound; one-touch CD editing; three levels of bass adjustment; speaker size adjustment; test tone; multichannel delay

SOCKETS

SC-HDX3: left, right, centre audio line in; three pairs of springclip connections; connector for SC-HDA710 control connector
SC-HDA710: tuner inputs; high, med and low springclip connections for left/right speakers; 5.1-ch phono audio outs; composite video out

DIMENSIONS

SC-HDA710: 173(w) x 363.5(h) x 297.5(d)mm
SC-HDX3: 129(w) x 324(h) x 180(d)mm

CONTACT

Panasonic/Technics ☎ 0990 357357
www.panasonic.co.uk

TEST DATA

Video jitter: 4ns (very good)
Signal-to-noise ratio: -64.4dB (av)
Chroma AM/PM: -70.7dB/-60.8dB (excellent/average)
Chroma crosstalk: -35.9dB (poor)
Frequency response (S-video) at 5.8MHz : -8.22dB (very good)
composite: -8.52dB (very good)
Digital audio deviation: 716.6ps (fair)

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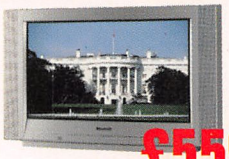

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- 28" Wide FST Screen • Flexible zoom modes
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- 47" Wide Rear Projection TV
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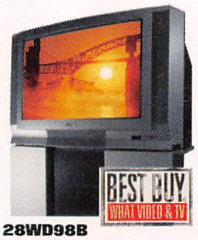

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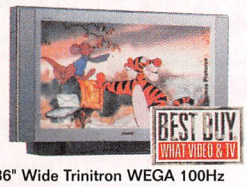

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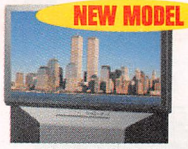

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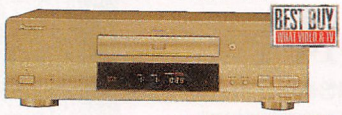

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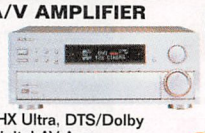

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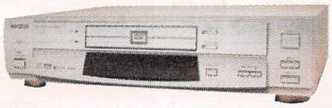

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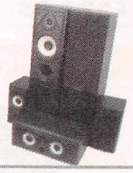

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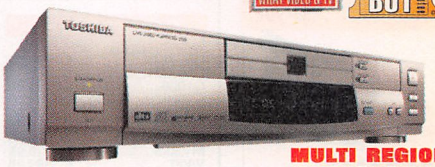

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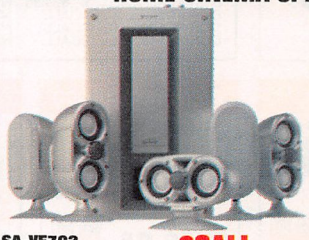

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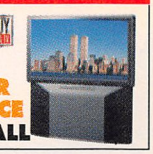

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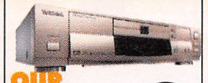

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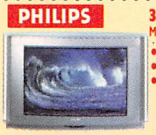

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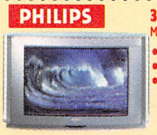

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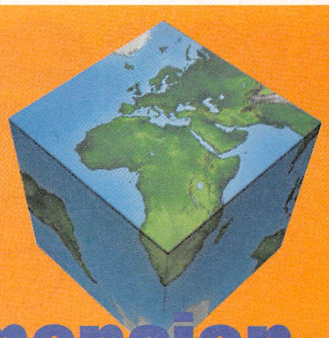

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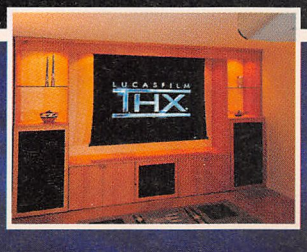

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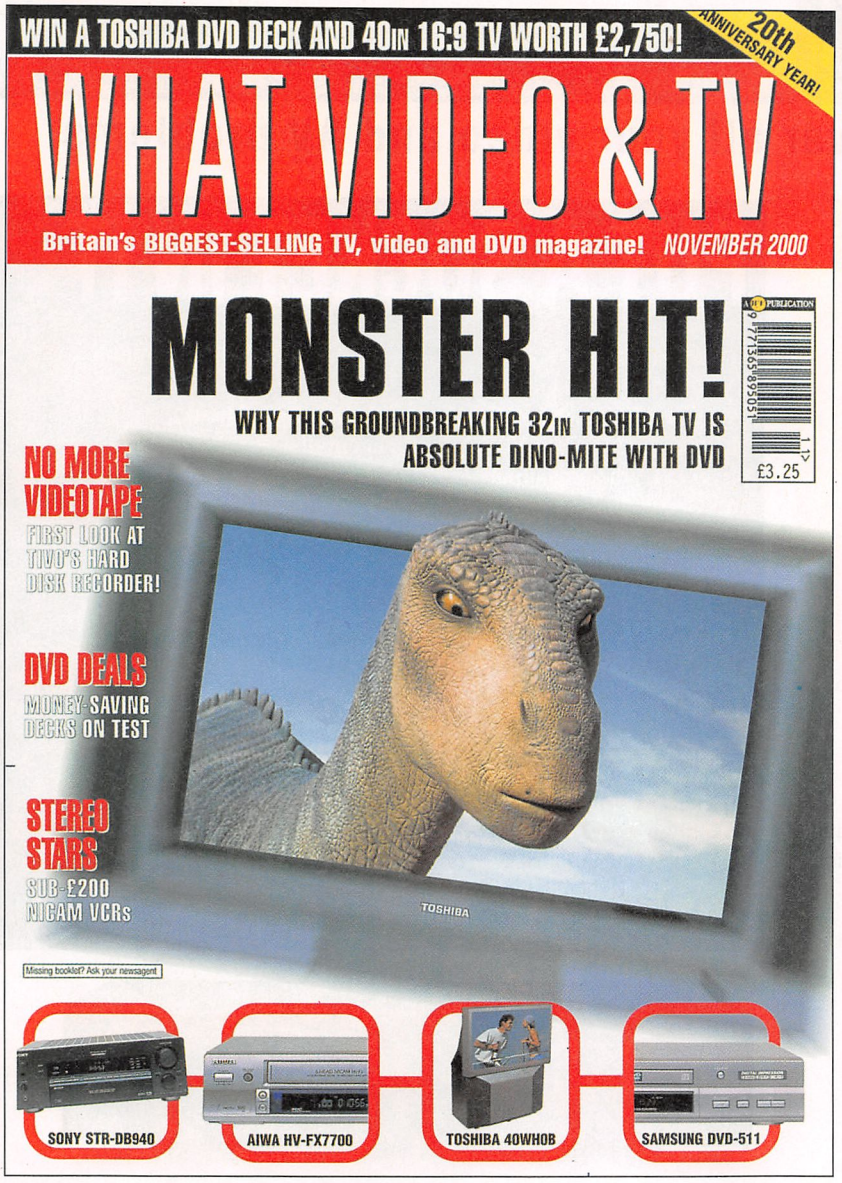

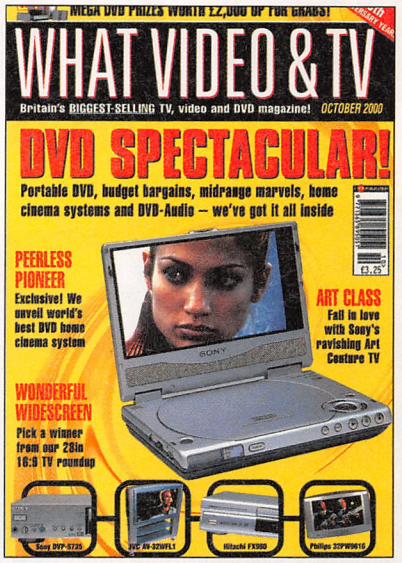

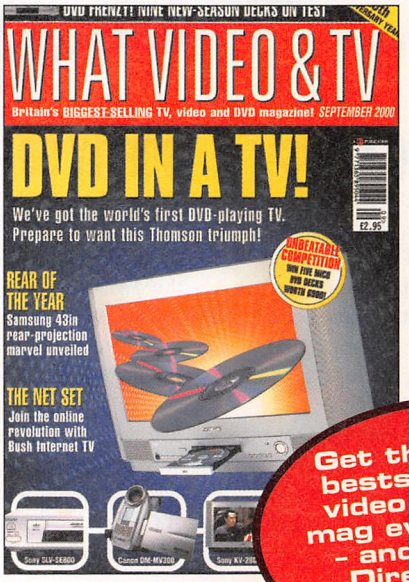

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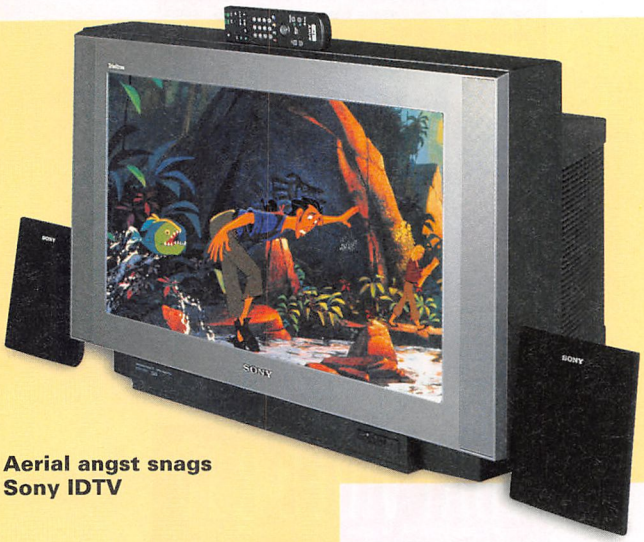


Aerial angst snags Sony IDTV

BREAKING NEWS

I'm having trouble with digital picture breakup on my Sony KV28DS60 IDTV. For the first 30min of viewing the picture often degenerates into blocky garbage and the 'poor signal' caption pop up. After that it's OK.

I'm getting a replacement but I'm worried that another Sony might do the same. Surely all IDTVs can't have this problem?

Lyndon Brooke
via email

The tuner/demodulators fitted to these sets do need a warm-up period before reaching optimum performance, but it needs a marginal-quality signal to demonstrate this very slight change in decoding ability.

The most likely cause of your problem – and a near-certain one if the replacement set behaves in the same way – is a poor aerial signal, even though it may give satisfactory results on analogue viewing.

Short-term ghosting and signal reflections can cause problems with terrestrial DTV, as can an excessively strong signal, believe it or not. If the replacement set gives trouble, then get a good rigger to check out your aerial and signal. See below for a contact number for the CAI, Confederation of Aerial Industries.

SOFTLY SOFTLY

When playing DVDs or Video CDs on my Hitachi C2556TN TV with the sharpness control turned up, there's a white outline around figures. With sharpness set to low the outline disappears, but the picture is very soft.

Is this something I have to live with or is there another way of getting crisp pictures without the ghosting effect?

B Cook
SE London

What you describe is common, to a greater or lesser degree, to all TVs and VCRs which feature a picture sharpness control. It's down to you to choose the optimum setting to balance picture crispness against the 'ringing' effect in the picture, the result of signal overshoot in the enhancement circuit.

Different picture sources require different settings of the sharpness control, and you're much better off with DVD images, which are inherently more detailed and crisper than those from VHS tape. If it were possible to edge-enhance low-definition pictures without penalty it would have been done! Modern TV designs are better at this than older models.

Dim display dupes dim repairman

PUT A SOCKET IN IT

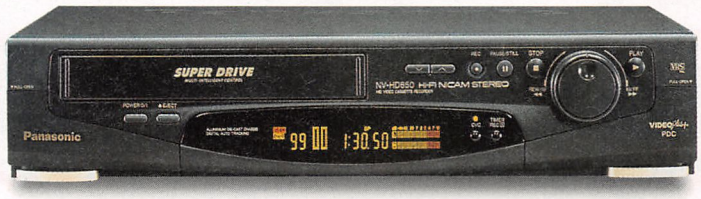
I have just bought a Sony KV-36FS70 TV. It's a great set, except for one small problem. My Pioneer DV-626D DVD player (a US model) outputs an S-video signal via a 4-pin socket, but I don't want to plug an unsightly lead into the TV's front socket.

When I try to use Scart 2 or Scart 3 ports at the rear of the set I get a fuzzy colour picture, no matter what lead and/or plug/adaptor I use. The set is failing to switch to S-mode automatically, even though the user's manual says it should. Is there a way to manually configure the TV for S-input on Scart 2 or 3?

Stephen Donaldson
via email

Yes, your TV can auto-configure between S-video and composite on the Scart port, but only on a PAL input. The dealer who sold you the set should arrange for a technician to call and enable 'NTSC Y/C Detect' in the 'special adjustments' section of the installation/service mode.

If the receiver is from an early batch (unlikely in a new purchase now), you may need a software update to provide this service-mode option.



Copy-protection can be bad for your VCR's health

TOSH ABOUT TOSH

I would appreciate your help with my Toshiba V428B VCR. Its front-panel display went dim, and stops working. If I put a cassette in I can hear a slight noise from within, but then the deck shuts down again.

The repair man can't figure it out, and I've now (after four weeks) got the machine back from him still unrepaired.

J Watson
E London

Get the machine to a proper repair shop, one appointed by Toshiba! The most common cause of this symptom is failure of an optocoupler (IP50) in the power supply, which lowers the voltage on the internal supply lines. My workshop would charge about £44 for sorting this one out.

William Elford wrote to me about his Panasonic NV-HD650B, which gives good pictures on his own recordings – be they from TV programmes or his camcorder – but distorted images when he's playing commercially produced ones,

Send your queries to *Video Clinic, What Video & TV*, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TW, or email: videoclinic@whatvideotv.com. For a guaranteed personal reply, post your query with a cheque for £3.95, made payable to Paul Richards, together with an SAE. The answers to selected questions will be printed in the magazine. Unfortunately, we are unable to reply to every email.

US S-video vexes Sony's Scarts

typically Disney films. The problem stems from Macrovision copy-protection, and the cure is for your dealer or service agent to fit a mod kit, part number VEDMACRO.

IN SEARCH OF A SAT-SWITCHER

My 15-year-old VCR needs replacing. I'm looking for one which can automatically select the required satellite channel on my digital set-top box. Can any VCRs do this? If not, what would you recommend for under £300?

Alan Westwood
via email

Set-top box timer control is becoming more widely available now in VCRs, with Panasonic and Toshiba leading the field. I recommend the Panasonic NV-FJ760, reviewed in our August '00 issue, and (at the time of writing) going for as little as £265 from Hi-Spek on ☎ 01727 791133.

This machine has many other features and an excellent performance for the price. Order a reprint of our review (see p178 for details) if you don't have a copy of the August issue.

Talking of satellite recording, Peter M wonders why he can't record some Sky Box Office movies from his digibox.

Perplexing PAL problem

It's because they're Macrovision copy-protected. Talk to Keene (☎ 01332 830550) about its £55 stabiliser type VP260.

CONFUSED OF YORK

In your September '00 issue you reviewed the Mico DVD-A980 DVD player. You stated that there is no RGB-out facility on this machine. Will I be able to watch NTSC discs on an ordinary PAL TV, or will I need an NTSC-capable TV to view them in colour?

At present I use a Philips Nicam portable set which doesn't feature NTSC, but does have RGB.

SJ Harvey
York

We have a bit of confusion here! RGB is a picture-coupling system (a very pure one), while NTSC is a TV specification governing colour-encoding and picture-scanning parameters.

Even though RGB coupling bypasses the colour-encoding system and thus makes it irrelevant, the NTSC system uses a field-scanning rate of 60Hz, 20 per cent faster than our PAL system.

PAL-only TVs can seldom get a grip of this, so no, your TV will not be able to display pictures from Region 1 discs, even if it were coupled to an RGB-capable player. Region 2 replay will be fine, however.

The only solution would be a digital standards-converter, either standalone or built into the player.

HITACHI HICCUP

My Hitachi C2546TN TV (a display model) has developed a fault. It starts up OK, but after a while the sound and picture go off, leaving just the standby light on. Pulling out the mains plug and then reinserting it temporarily cures the problem.

Mark Reed
via email

I can suggest the cause and cure, but you cannot repair the set yourself! Three resistors (R950/1/2) need replacing in the power-supply section, then set the HT voltage to exactly 146V. The soldering at the following components needs to be checked and reflowed where necessary: IC951/2; diodes D952/6/7; and resistors R718/719.

If you don't know a Hitachi service agent near you ring ☎ 0345 581455 for contact details.

Switching channels is easy with the FJ670, even with digiboxes

Sony suffers that pinking feeling

SONY IN THE PINK

My Sony DVP-S525D DVD player has been made multiregional by Link Electronics. It's hooked up via my Thomson VPH 6590U VCR (with RGB loopthrough) to my Thomson 32WS23U TV.

My problem is that skin tones on Region 1 DVDs seem to be excessively pink, almost verging on an orange hue. Region 2 DVD pictures look absolutely fine.

My TV only has Cold, Neutral or Warm settings for tint, which doesn't help much, and if I tone down the colour setting to compensate for the colour error the rest of the picture becomes washed-out.

Simon Reeve
via email

Your problem has nothing to do with the multiregion conversion. It's also unlikely that the DVD player is faulty, though a bug in its MPEG section is possible.

Far more likely is a fault in the TV, where I'm not convinced that the signal is being processed in RGB, with your ability to control tint, colour, etc!

First try connecting the DVD player direct to the TV, ensuring that both are configured for RGB mode. If that doesn't cure the problem, let's hope that you can get hold of an expert and well-equipped service technician, perhaps via Thomson on ☎ 01276 520920.

NOKIA KNOCKING ON

I'm after a DVD deck, probably a Mico DVD-A980. I need to check with you that my TV supports NTSC. It's a Nokia KX5520, about 10 years old. It does sport a Scart socket, currently hooked up to my Sony SLV-E820 VCR.

How can I test whether the TV will work with NTSC signals? If it doesn't, what's the implication for use with the DVD player? And can it be modified or converted for use with a DVD deck?

Steve Lewis
via email

I'm afraid that Nokia model KX5520, now very old, is limited to PAL operation, and cannot be converted for use with NTSC. Its chipset is unsuitable in terms of both colour decoding and vertical scanning frequency.

Unless you replace the TV, you'll be able to play Region 2/PAL discs, but not Region 1/NTSC ones, even with a DVD player suited to US software.

THE EQUALISER

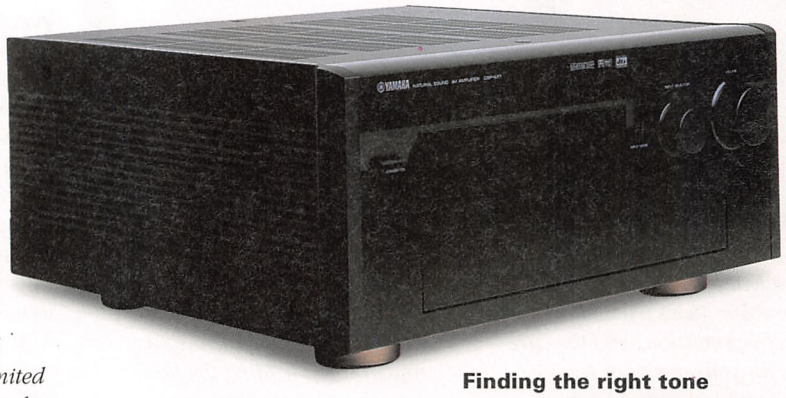
My home cinema system includes the Sony STR-DB930 AV amp. I'm very happy with it, but it's not possible to adjust the three-band graphic equaliser using the remote control.

Asked if it was possible to upgrade the system, my local hi-fi store could find no AV amp/decoder with this 'remote control of tone' feature. Can you? I still have a superb JVC stereo amplifier with this facility.

Deborah Robinson
via email

Neither Denon, Kenwood, Marantz nor Pioneer offer remote 'tone' control. It's an unusual request, not high on most buyers' wants lists. You can find what you want in the Yamaha range, however. Choose between models DSP-AX1 and DSP-A2, retailing at about £1,600 and £600 respectively.

Both amplifiers have complete remote control over a five-band graphic equaliser working on the centre channel. You can get details from Yamaha on ☎ 01923 233166.



Finding the right tone

LIFESTYLE UPGRADE

Having recently purchased a Bose Lifestyle 30 audio system, I'm now looking to replace my old Ferguson TV with a set capable of providing a high-quality picture.

Could you advise me on the best options, bearing in mind that the Bose system will provide the sound? I'm after a 28in, 32in or 36in set.
Simon Reynolds
via email

If only I had some idea of your budget/aspirations! Without, this must be a rather generalised reply. Plainly you won't want a set with Dolby Surround Sound, though the minimum available now is Nicam stereo. Plain picture monitors, without audio amplifiers or speakers, are not generally available.

A 28in widescreen set has a surprisingly small screen area compared to a 4:3 set of the same nominal size, so go for a 32in or 36in model. Look at the Sony Wega sets or models from Toshiba or Panasonic.

100Hz should provide painless viewing

FEAR OF GHOSTS

I'm looking for a 28in widescreen TV. I had narrowed it down to Panasonic's TX28PK10 and Sony's KV28FX60. But a dealer recently told me that 100Hz TVs exhibit ghosting on fast-moving action, because of the screen refresh rate. Is this true?
Nick Collard
via email

I've had a similar query from Tim Applegarth, who's looking at the Sony DS60 range for use with a Sky digibox, and is concerned about picture artefacts arising from the use together of two digital picture processors.

Early designs of DTV kit had problems with certain equipment combinations, but current designs present no hassles of this sort, especially when – in the case of a digibox – the link is made via an RGB cable.

Buy with confidence, and enjoy the benefits which digital technology brings: flicker-free pictures, pure colour, no ghosts, snow or grain, onscreen programme guides, etc.

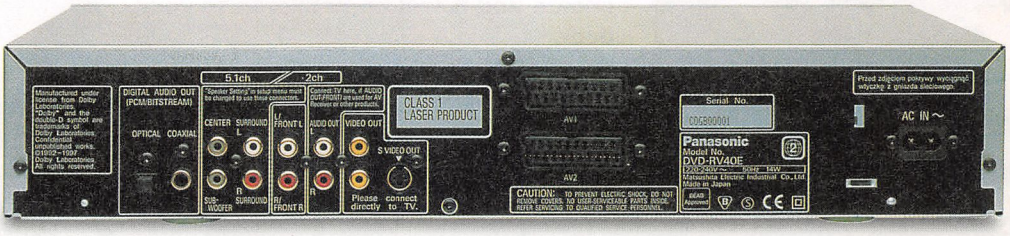
DOUBLE TROUBLE?

I recently purchased a Hitachi widescreen TV with Dolby Digital/DTS decoders and amplifier as part of a package. I intend to buy a DVD player, either the Sony DVP-S325 (which does not have a decoder) or the Panasonic DVD-RV40 (which does).

If I choose the DVD-RV40, would having two decoders in the chain cause any problems? And is this deck multiregional?
Don Jordan
Nottingham

No, there will be no problems in using a DVD player with onboard decoder in conjunction with a Dolby-fitted TV. It seems wasteful to pay for a duplicated facility which you won't use, however!

No DVD players should be sold in the UK as multiregion types. It infringes an agreement between the makers and the software copyright holders. You can, however, purchase ready-converted Panasonic players from some of our advertisers: talk to Paul Taylor on ☎ 01733 352122, Techtronics on ☎ 01778 562920, or Sound and Vision, ☎ 01204 707079 ❐



A second Dolby Digital decoder creates only waste

FRENCH LETTER

We need a new TV, one that can receive both British and French transmissions. We live near Dover and my wife is a French lecturer at the University of Kent. Ideally we would like a 32in widescreen IDTV.

Do you know where such a set might be found? Would we get the full French TV service, including teletext? What should we do about aerials? Would it be simpler to buy a second (Secam) TV? Any advice would be gratefully received.
Paul Scott
via email

First, check that French reception is possible at your site. The CAI (☎ 020 8902 8998) can put you in touch with local experts on that, and the chances are good.

If a signal can be had, you need a very special TV: the everyday 'multistandard' types are only so far downstream, as it were, from the Scart socket: they cannot receive French transmissions. Aerial Techniques (☎ 01202 425055) can offer a set which fulfils your needs.

Its Thomson 32WF64EB, priced at about £1,100, is a 32in widescreen type with British and French Fastext, Secam L sound, hyperband tuner, picture zoom, etc. To get UK digital TV broadcasts you'll need a separate set-top box and probably another aerial, which mustn't face towards France.

In answer to Kiran Patwardhan's question, there are no multistandard S-VHS decks available. But no matter, India and the UK both use the PAL system, so buy an S-VHS machine here for use in your country.

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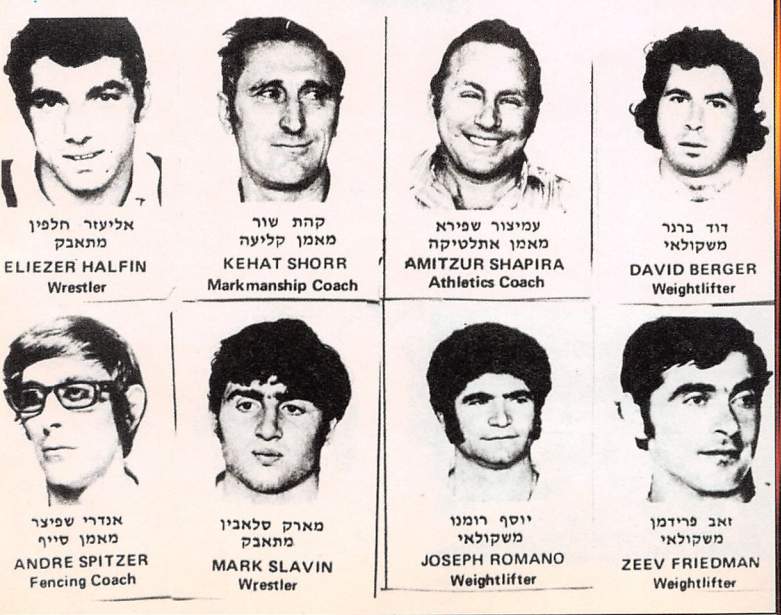
ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER

Presentation: Widescreen 16:9, stereo
Price: £12.99
Director: Kevin McDonald
Movie: The kidnapping of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics by an extreme Palestinian group called Black September and the amazing events that followed are the subject of this Oscar-winning documentary. The initial indifference of the Olympic committee and the subsequent litany of incompetent actions by the German authorities are so far beyond belief they would be deemed implausible in a work of fiction.

Both archive footage and contemporary interviews (including the only surviving terrorist) are blended successfully to produce a work which is powerful and compelling. A genuine must-see film.
Transfer: Stereo audio combined with broadcast video which is nearly 30 years old might not make the most of a high-end home cinema setup, but they contribute to the '70s feel of the piece. The widescreen presentation helps make this a decent home cinema experience. **AJ**

Picture	★★★★☆
Sound	★★★☆☆
Extras	★★★☆☆
Movie	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER:

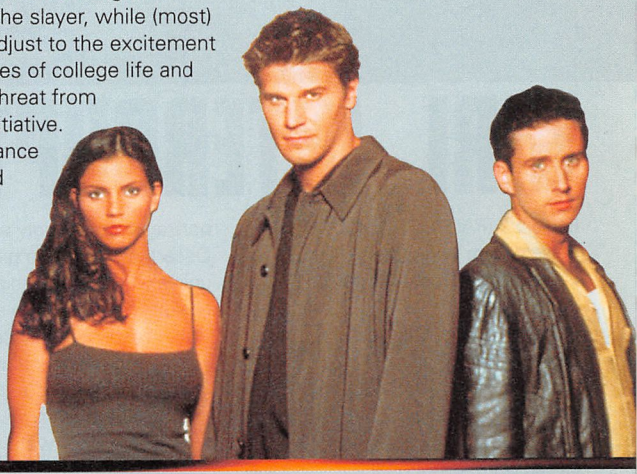
SEASON 4, PART 1 & ANGEL: SEASON 1, PART 1

Presentation: Fullscreen, Dolby Surround
Price: £34.99 (per box set)
Movie: Everyone's favourite Californian vampire slayer is back in this collection of Season Four episodes (the first half). Meanwhile, the new spin-off *Angel* gets the same treatment, which is just as well because it's currently being cut to shreds in a wildly inappropriate early evening Channel 4 slot. C4's offering is also out of sync with BBC2's *Buffy* showings, making the two major crossover episodes (3 and 8) nonsensical. So, enjoy them here, uncut and in sequence.

Buffy goes from strength to strength as the slayer, while (most) of her pals adjust to the excitement and challenges of college life and face a new threat from the shady Initiative. There's romance for Buffy and excellent storylines for Willow, Oz and returning villain Spike. The batch also includes top *Buffy* episode thus far, *Hush*.

Meanwhile, former *Buffy* regulars Angel and Cordelia form their own private investigation bureau, helping people from the forces of darkness. Less supernatural and more adult in tone, it takes a while for the fledgling show to find its feet (think *Moonlighting* meets *Millennium* with *Buffy*'s offbeat humour and you'll get the idea). But if you love *Buffy*, *Angel* will also become essential viewing. **IC**

Movie (Buffy)	★★★★★
Movie (Angel)	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★★☆



WIN BUFFY & ANGEL BOX SETS!

Thanks to 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, four lucky *What Video & TV* readers will find the above *Buffy* and *Angel* box sets materialising in their homes soon. Both sets are available to buy for £34.99 each from 23 October.

To enter, simply answer the following question and add your name and address on a postcard, or back of a sealed envelope, then send it to 'Buffy & Angel Comp', *What Video & TV*, WVIP, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TW. Closing date is 6 December 2000.

THE QUESTION

Who was Spike's former lover?

A. Clarissa
B. Drusilla
C. Priscilla

RULES OF ENTRY

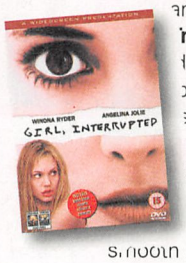
1. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
2. There are no cash substitutes.
3. Employees of WV Publications and Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment are not eligible to enter.
4. Entrants must be aged 15 years or over.
5. Only one entry per household please.
6. Entries must be marked 'Buffy & Angel Competition'.
7. Closing date for entries: 6 December 2000.

DVD SCREENINGS

GIRL, INTERRUPTED

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 1.85:1, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 5.1
Price: £19.99
Director: James Mangold
Stars: Winona Ryder, Angelina Jolie, Whoopi Goldberg, Vanessa Redgrave
Movie: Dark, emotional drama based on a true story (and book) of a young woman's experiences in a mental hospital in the late '60s. Ryder gives perhaps the best performance of her career as Susanna, an introspective writer whose 'borderline personality disorder' makes her a questionable candidate for hospitalisation.

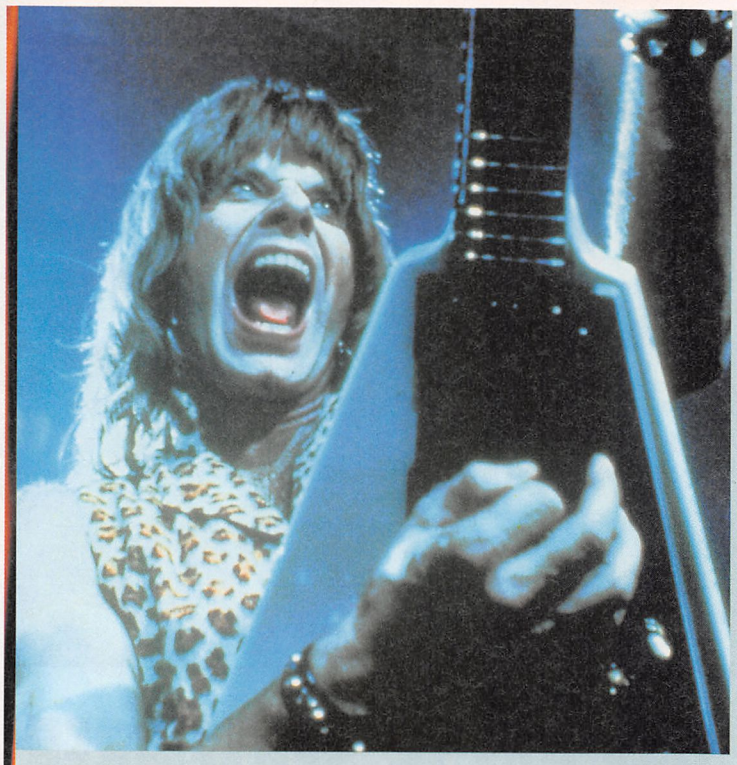
The whole institution shudders at the tumultuous presence of sociopath Lisa (Angelina Jolie, whose convincing and charismatic portrayal deservingly won her an Oscar), and the two girls become unlikely allies. Mangold's film takes few predictable turns and the result is oddly compelling and heartrending.



Transfer: A downbeat film drawn from a sombre palette – with just occasional glimpses of a brighter world outside. Either way, this transfer is stunning in its pin-sharp detail, deep hues and smooth presentation.

Audio, punctuated by Mychael Danna's sensitive score, is a sterling effort too. There's not much happening on the surround channels except some standout moments when Susanna really does drift into temporary insanity.
Extras: A worthy selection, including a commentary by the director/writer (best known for *CopLand*), isolated score track in Dolby Digital 5.1, 20min of interesting deleted scenes (again with explanatory commentary option), plus the usual featurette and filmographies. **IC**

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★☆
Extras	★★★☆☆
Movie	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★★☆



THIS IS SPINAL TAP

2010: THE YEAR WE MAKE CONTACT

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 2.35:1, non-anamorphic, Dolby Digital 5.1
Price: £15.99
Director: Peter Hyams
Stars: Roy Scheider, John Lithgow, Helen Mirren
Movie: A sequel to Stanley Kubrick's sci-fi milestone was always going to be a tall order and, sadly, Peter Hyams (*Capricorn One*) isn't really up to the task. As a straightforward space opus, *2010...* is adequate and, although dating back to the mid-'80s, the deep-space model effects still look impressive. The film, though, is mundane and stilted compared to the awe-inspiring beauty of the original.

Transfer: Clean and efficient to look at but sadly non-anamorphic, so knock a point off our score if viewing on a widescreen TV. Colours, especially the deep hues of Jupiter which dominate the space scenes, are strong.

Audio is in full 5.1 but this only comes into its own during the climactic scenes, where all six speakers burst into life.
Extras: Apart from scene access and multi-language tracks, this disc is as empty as the vacuum of space. **IC**

Picture	★★★★☆
Sound	★★★★☆
Extras	★☆☆☆☆
Movie	★★★☆☆
Overall	★★★☆☆

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 1.85:1, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 5.1
Price: £19.99
Director: Rob Reiner
Stars: Michael McKean, Christopher Guest, Harry Shearer, Tony Hendra

Movie: Infectiously amusing 1984 mock-rockumentary charting the increasingly disastrous American tour of a washed-up British heavy metal band. Diverse filmmaker Rob Reiner (*The Princess Bride*, *Misery*) directs and appears in the guise of aloof documentarian Marty DiBergi.

The US cast do a sterling job of their English accents, the often ad-libbed dialogue contains many classics and the songs are spot-on in their loving dissection of pompous rock. Any resemblance to Judas Priest is entirely intentional.

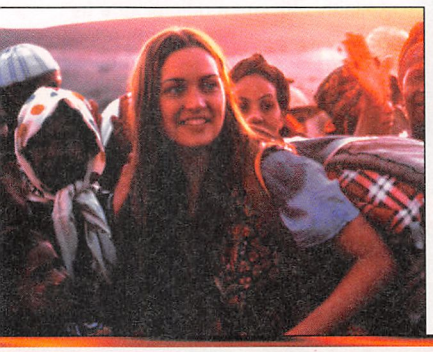
Transfer: A new print but sadly still a very grainy one, and colours are decidedly drained of life. This does add an authentic documentary sheen to the image so perhaps it's intended. Fake or not, this is all about the music and the soundtrack is great, remixed - as it should be – into Dubly (sic) Digital. Make sure your home cinema amp goes to 11.

Extras: Two discs' worth of supplementary material. On one is the movie plus commentary by the *Spinal Tap* cast in character, often as funny as the film itself and well worth a listen. On disc 2 is 65min of deleted scenes (almost as much as the main feature, although not quite as amusing), plus various additional snippets including an in-character appearance by DiBergi, TV clips, ads and standalone music videos. Menus are also delightfully in keeping with the movie and have plenty of audio clips. **IC**

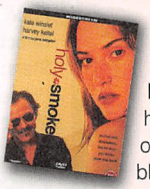
Picture	✪✪✪
Sound	✪✪✪✪
Extras	✪✪✪✪
Movie	✪✪✪✪
Overall	✪✪✪✪

HOLY SMOKE

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 16:9, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 5.1



Price: £19.99
Director: Jane Campion
Stars: Kate Winslet, Harvey Keitel, Pam Grier, Julie Hamilton



Movie: *Holy Smoke* is a curious film. Resembling co-writer/director Campion's earlier work, which focused on the surreally dysfunctional Australian family, it's an unsettling viewing experience.This mirrors the hypnotic effect at work in the film itself, as Ruth (Winslet) finds spiritual bliss in India, and panics her family into tricking her back to Oz. There they hire ace 'exit counsellor' PJ Waters (Keitel), specialist in reintegrating cult members into their family. Campion deliberately leaves key questions unanswered. Is Ruth really better off with her nutty family or in the arms of her beloved guru? And is blinkered oblivion preferable to the strictures of a modern industrial society? It's for the viewer to decide. Despite the, at times, frustrating plot, *Holy Smoke* is shot with characteristic beauty and verve by the multi award-winning auteur.

Transfer: There's no confusion about either the film's shimmering beauty or the excellence of this transfer, though. The stunning image is a montage of luscious, ripe hues, both the dazzling confusion of India and the scorched, dusty Outback. Both locations are presented exquisitely by this anamorphic transfer.

Audio is equally strong. Clear, sharp and vivid both in its presentation of dialogue and the eclectic soundtrack, this 5.1 mix is a real delight.

Extras: Theatrical trailer and TV spot, plus writers' & actors' commentaries. **DR**

Picture	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound	✪✪✪✪✪
Extras	✪✪✪✪✪
Movie	✪✪✪✪✪
Overall	✪✪✪✪✪

THE TOWERING INFERNO

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 2.35:1, non-anamorphic, Dolby Digital 2.0
Price: £15.99
Director: John Guillermin
Stars: Steve McQueen, Paul Newman, William Holden, Faye Dunaway, Fred Astaire, OJ Simpson

Movie: Guillerman's 1974 disaster spectacular launched a whole genre of similar movies. This multi-Oscar winning, star-studded epic definitely shows its age though, in more ways than one. When the world's tallest skyscraper bursts into flame, Newman and McQueen combine forces to achieve increasingly spectacular and daring rescues.

The heavyweight cast occupy a range of rather shallow and clichéd roles, although the set-pieces are well worth waiting for. We recommend saving it till Christmas Day, then watching it instead of *Noel's Christmas House Party*.

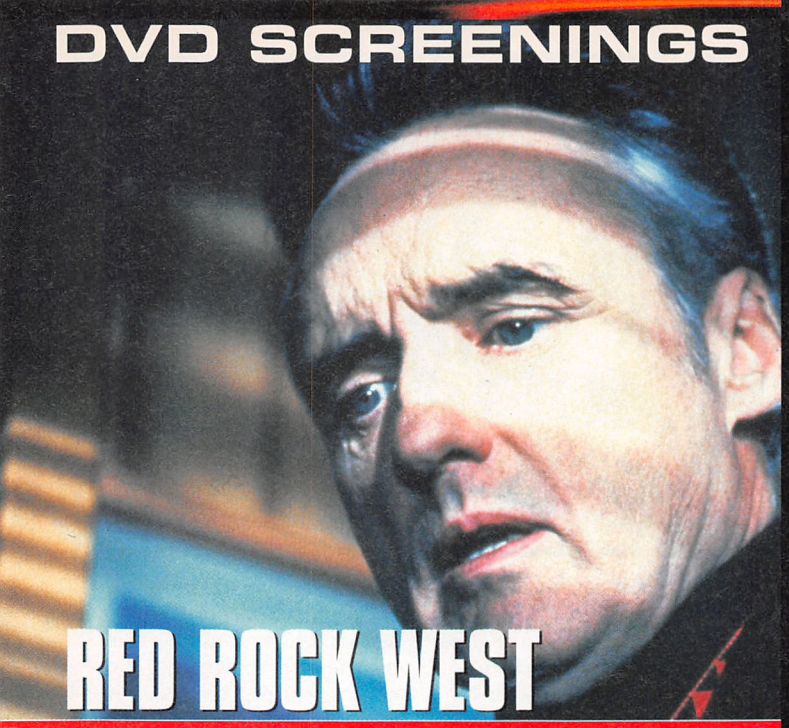
Transfer: This is where the film really seems dated. It has a definite TV movie look, with rather dull, flat colours (despite the gaudy '70s colour scheme). The image also suffers from damage to the film stock, although we've seen much worse with films of this age.

The stereo soundtrack is, as you would expect, nothing to set your aural world on fire. At least the dialogue is clearly audible.

Extras: Theatrical trailer only. **DR**

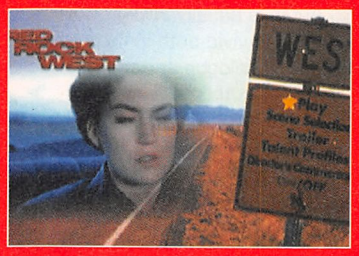
Picture	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound	✪✪✪✪✪
Extras	✪✪✪✪✪
Movie	✪✪✪✪✪
Overall	✪✪✪✪✪

DVD SCREENINGS



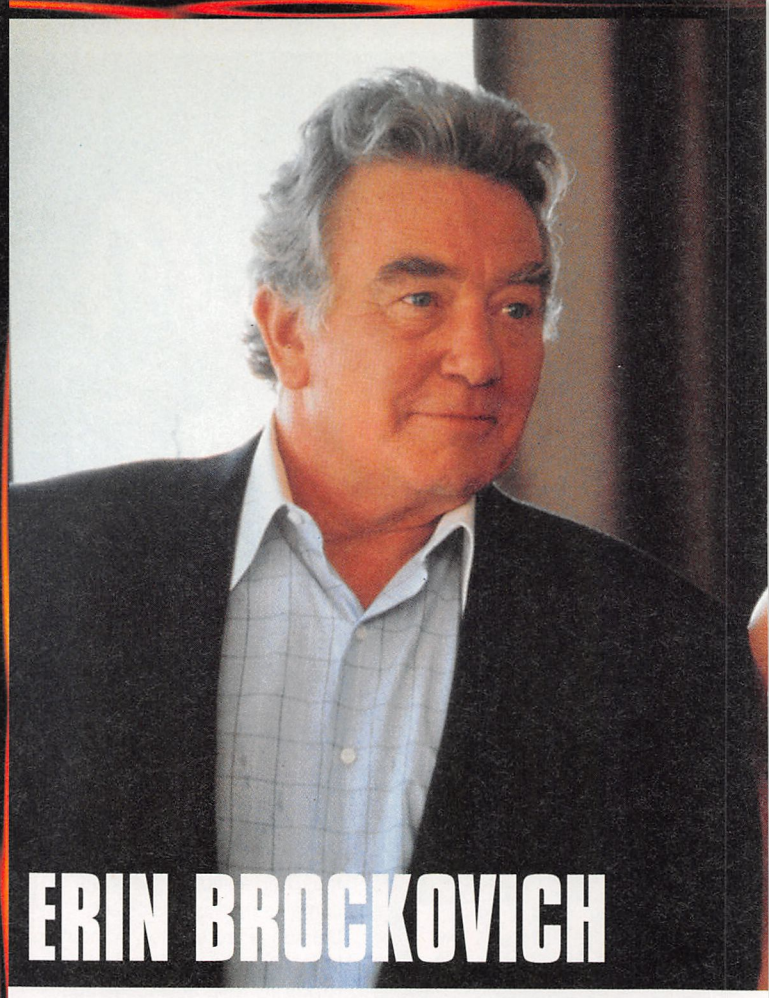
RED ROCK WEST

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 1.85:1, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 2.0
Price: £19.99
Director: John Dahl
Stars: Nicolas Cage, Dennis Hopper, Lara Flynn Boyle, JT Walsh
Movie: Terrific modern film noir thriller from 1992 by Dahl (who, a year later, went on to create the even better *Last Seduction*) which throws a dream cast (including the late, great Walsh) into a tense, superbly plotted tale of small-town murder and money-grubbing.



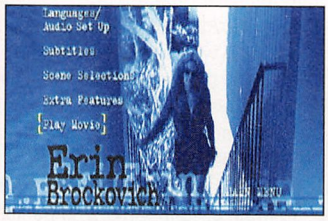
Using archetypes like a lone drifter (Cage), corrupt sheriff (Walsh), sultry femme fatale (Boyle), bags of cash, a hitman and mistaken identity, Dahl concocts a heady brew. The first half hour alone is better than many entire films.
Transfer: A tad grainy but an otherwise moody and highly watchable picture. Sound is somewhat constrained in its basic stereo form but it's the dialogue that counts, especially Hopper's characteristic outbursts.
Extras: Expected trailer and biog text plus one unexpected highlight, a director's commentary. It doesn't contain too many memorable revelations, but it's a welcome deeper insight into a red-hot movie. **IC**

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Extras	★★★★★
Movie	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★



ERIN BROCKOVICH

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 16:9, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 5.1
Price: £19.99
Director: Steven Soderbergh
Stars: Julia Roberts, Albert Finney, Aaron Eckhart
Movie: A great true story of smalltown folks pitted against a giant corporation which has been poisoning the water supply. Roberts plays the leggy, busty and sassy Erin, a penniless single mother whose job at a legal firm starts her on the path to taking up the townspeople's fight for them.

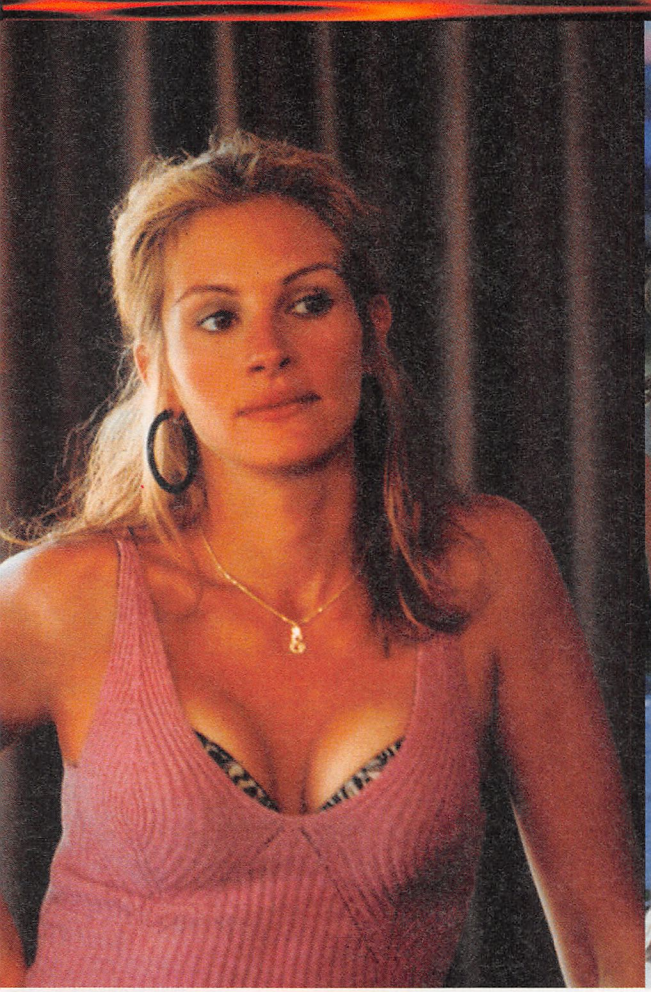


Her stubborn confrontationalism does gets a little annoying, but her dogged enthusiasm is admirable. A highly efficient studio picture by ex-indie director Soderbergh (*Out of Sight*), the result is well above the TV movie it could easily have been. The final act is somewhat predictable, but it's a classic underdog story which has

CONAN THE DESTROYER

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 16:9, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 2.0 (stereo)
Price: £19.99
Director: Richard Fleischer
Stars: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Grace Jones, Wilt Chamberlain, Mako
Movie: What does it take to make a daft swords 'n' sorcery flick? Take a large dollop of barely clad, freakishly muscular Arnie, add a teaspoon of pop psycho Grace Jones, a few wizards, a ridiculous mystical quest and some buxom babes and Hey Presto! You've got *Conan the Destroyer.*

Although a shoddy imitation of its predecessor, *CTD* is enough of a laugh to make 103min of fairly

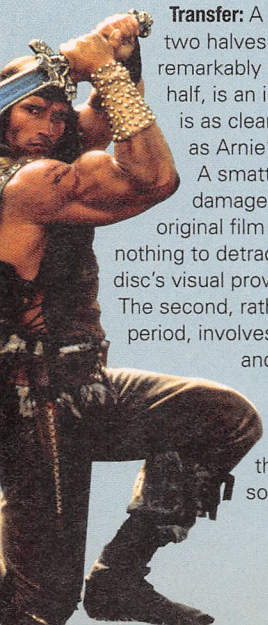


plenty of rousing and emotional scenes.

Transfer: The film's heartfelt storyline is matched by a warm colour scheme, expertly reproduced in this disc. Detail and contrast remain high, while grain is kept largely at bay. Audio won't set a home cinema system on fire but is, again, effective for this type of movie.

Extras: The main point of interest is the 30min of deleted scenes (with commentary option). Soderbergh explains his first cut was over 3hr, so it's easy to see why so much material was on tap. Sadly, there's no director's commentary on the feature (and, no, the Region 1 doesn't have one either). Other extras include isolated music track, the usual trailer, making of..., profiles and a brief look at the real Erin Brockovich (proving just how good Roberts was at portraying her). **IC**

Picture	★★★★☆
Sound	★★★★☆
Extras	★★★☆☆
Movie	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★★☆



painless viewing. If only someone had thought to dub over Arnie's Cro-Magnon dialogue.

Transfer: A game of two halves. The first, remarkably impressive half, is an image which is as clean and chiselled as Arnie's bulging bod. A smattering of damage to the original film stock does nothing to detract from this disc's visual prowess. The second, rather lacklustre period, involves a limited and unexciting two-channel (not mono, as stated on the packaging) soundtrack. Basil Poledouris' score and the dumb and dumber dialogue is clear and sharp, though.

Extras: Theatrical trailer and an excellent booklet, with production stills on one side and the original film poster on the other. **DR**

Picture	★★★★☆
Sound	★★☆☆☆
Extras	★★☆☆☆
Movie	★★☆☆☆
Overall	★★★☆☆

GET CARTER

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 1.85:1, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 1.0 (mono)
Price: £19.99
Director: Mike Hodges
Stars: Michael Caine, Ian Hendry, John Osborne, Britt Ekland
Movie: Caine plays Jack Carter, a villain on a mission who travels to Newcastle to uncover the truth about his brother's suspicious death. With Carter sniffing around the underworld the Geordie gangsters decide to get to him before he unveils the facts, but Carter remains one step ahead and delivers a masterclass in extracting revenge.

The gritty realism of the location, the documentary-style filming and Caine's impeccable performance combine to make this one of the most gripping British gangster movies ever. You must get *Get Carter*.

Transfer: Very good. Despite the age of the print (1971), the transfer retains all the vitality and depth of the original movie, with only a few scratches. Audio is clear and Roy Budd's chillingly simple theme tune helps foster the film's menacing tone, but there's nothing in the way of surround effects.

Extras: The insightful commentary by Caine, Hodges and cinematographer Wolfgang Suschitzky should go straight into every film studies course. There are also three trailers and subtitles in four languages (plus English for the hard of hearing). **AJ**

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★☆☆
Extras	★★★☆☆
Movie	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

WIN GET CARTER ON DVD!

Get Carter is set to be the must-have classic British movie on video for Christmas 2000. Already available to buy on DVD (£19.99) plus VHS widescreen and pan-and-scan, (both £12.99), *What Video & TV* has got together with Warner Home Video to offer six lucky readers the chance to win a copy of *Get Carter* on DVD.

To enter simply write your name and address on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope, together with the answer to the following question and send it to 'Get Carter Competition', *What Video & TV*, WVIP, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TW. Closing date 6 December 2000.

THE QUESTION

Get Carter mostly takes place in which British town?

A. London **B. Newcastle** **C. Manchester**

RULES OF ENTRY

1. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
2. There are no cash substitutes.
3. Employees of WVIP and Warner Home Video are not eligible to enter.
4. Entrants must be aged 18 years or over.
5. Only one entry per household please.
6. Entries must be marked 'Get Carter Comp'.
7. Closing date for entries: 6 December 2000.

SOUTH PARK VOL 8, 9, 10 & 11

Region: 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 (PAL)
Presentation: Fullscreen, Dolby Digital 2.0 (stereo)
Price: £19.99 (per disc)
Directors: Various
Stars: Stan, Kyle, Cartman and Kenny
Movie: After a triumphant debut, *South Park* returns to DVD in all its infantile and hilarious glory. The entirety of Series 3 has been crammed onto four discs, all of which are a must-have for diehard *SP* fans.

JURASSIC PARK

Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 1.85:1, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 5.1
Price: £19.99
Director: Steven Spielberg
Stars: Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Richard Attenborough, Jeff Goldblum
Movie: Scientists clone a bunch of dinosaurs in order to set up the world's greatest public attraction, Jurassic Park. A group of scientists, accountants, and a couple of annoying small children head off to the island it's based on to sign off on the safety of the park, only to have the dinosaurs run amok and endanger their lives.

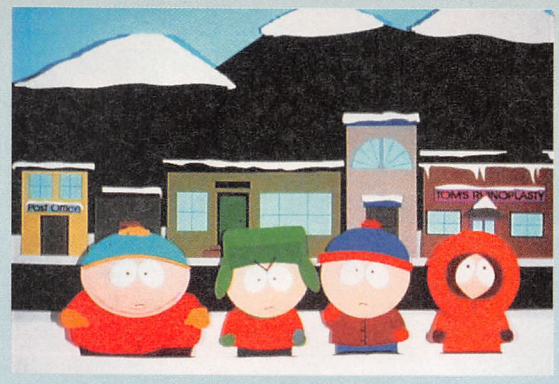
Spielberg directs the movie with panache and a superb eye for the epic scale of the story. The cast acquit themselves uniformly well, with Jeff Goldblum's mathematician stealing the film by a mile. But what really makes the movie are Industrial, Light and Magic's CGI dinosaurs, which are simply mindblowing. Cinema doesn't come any more spectacular than this.

Transfer: A glorious transfer, with bold, vivid colour schemes and masses of detail on display. The CGI dinosaurs look far better than they did on the scratchy old print you saw at the cinema.

The audio is a masterpiece of demo room material, with plenty of surround effects and heaps of bass in evidence during the T-Rex attack.

Extras: This remarkably generous disc includes: a 50min making of... documentary; footage of early pre-production meetings; storyboards for five sequences; raw footage from the location scouting; Phil Tippet's original stop-motion animatic test for the Raptors in the kitchen scene; a look at the work of the foley artists; a production photo gallery; a *Dinosaur Encyclopedia*, focusing on creatures from the appropriate film; production notes; trailers for *Jurassic Park*, *The Lost World* & a teaser for *Jurassic Park 3*; cast & crew biogs and DVD-ROM material, all tied together by some wonderful animated menu screens. **AvB**

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Extras	★★★★★
Movie	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★



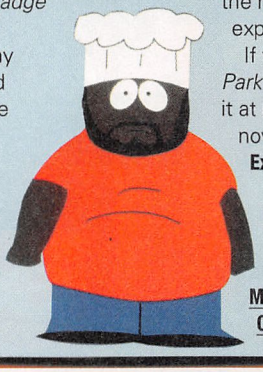
their own, while *Jewbilee* is a slice of zenophobic nastiness.

Volume 10 starts with *Chinpoko Mon*, a spoof on a certain kiddie craze, while *Starvin Marvin in Space* pushes the non-PC envelope a tad too far. *Korn's Groovy Pirate Ghost Mystery* is an homage to *Scoobie Doo*, and *Hooked on Monkey-Fonics* is sheer comedic bliss. Cartman enlists a masturbating monkey to help him win the spelling-bee, but (inevitably) things don't go to plan.

Volume 8 kicks off with *Rainforest Schmainforest*, a typically non-PC jaunt in which the fearsome foursome join the Getting Gay with Kids Choir, visit the rainforest and learn to hate it. *Spontaneous Combustion* involves exploding South Park citizens, while *Succubus* sees Chef saved from marrying an evil monster from hell. *Tweek vs Craig* sees Tweek fighting, erm, Craig, and *Jakovasaurs* stars a big, dumb animal (no, not Cartman).

Volume 9 leads with the gloriously ridiculous *Sexual Harassment Panda*, then moves on to the disc's highlight, *Cat Orgy*, which gives Cartman the starring role he was born for (and features a lot of shagging cats). *Two Guys Naked in a Hot Tub* finds Stan and Kyle's dads spurting white bubbles of

The final disc begins with *The Red Badge of Gayness*, a reasonably funny but long-winded reworking of the American Civil War. *Mr Hankey's Christmas Classics* is a slice of scatalogical silliness, while *Are You there God? It's Me Jesus* no doubt enraged the US Christian fraternity. Finally, *The Brown Noise* finds the boys taking part in the biggest-ever recorder concert, along with 4m other kiddies.



Transfer: *South Park* and DVD is a marriage made in heaven. The pristine digital format fits animation like a parka does Kenny, with its smooth, bright colours shining with a glory VHS or broadcast footage could never manage. These discs have been transferred with the same loving care as their predecessors, with nary a compression artefact to be seen. Sadly, the discs are all a cropped 4:3, but you can't have everything (unless you're Cartman).

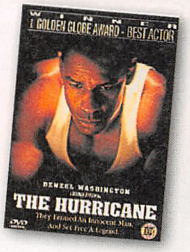
Sonics are unexciting, being a straight-from-TV stereo mix. Still, the many gags are clearly audible (all except Kenny's, of course), the highlight being Cartman's expletive/bleep-ridden tantrums.

If you've only ever seen *South Park* on TV, you've never seen it at its best. Buy it on DVD now, Goddamit!

Extras: Nope. **DR**

Picture	★★★★☆
Sound	★★★☆☆
Extras	★☆☆☆☆
Movie	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★☆☆

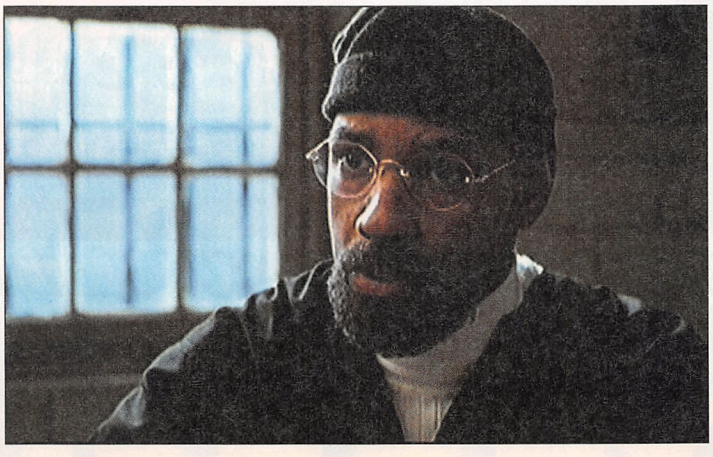
THE HURRICANE

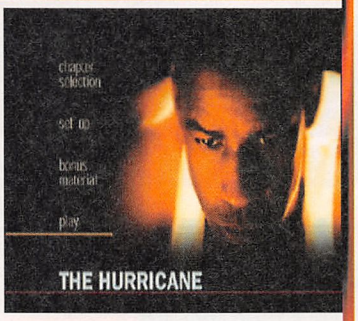


Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 1.85:1, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 5.1
Price: £19.99
Director: Norman Jewison
Stars: Denzel Washington, Vicellous Reon Shannon, Rod Steiger, John Hannah
Movie: A true story which reopens the suppurating wound of American racism, *The Hurricane* is an immensely powerful film. Jewison seamlessly moves back and forth through time and between monochrome and colour footage, constructing a mesmirizing and, at times, painfully harsh narrative.

Washington gives the performance of an outstanding career as Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter, a successful prizefighter wrongly imprisoned for the murder of three white people. The victim of prejudice, a malicious policeman and a sickening official cover-up, Carter spends decades rotting in prison. His unlikely rescuers come in the form of an idealistic teenager (Shannon) and his three Canadian carers.

Although overlong, it's hard to emphasise the visceral power





and dignity of Washington's performance, or the gut-wrenching impact of this film. You must see it.

Transfer: An awesome display of what DVD can do. The top-drawer image boasts the darkest blacks and brightest whites, all without any form of blemish.

Audio is, if anything, even better. It's both crystal-clear and tonally rich, with each note of the jazzy score sounding separate and true. Bob Dylan's titular song (written as part of the massive campaign to free Carter) is used to particular effect.

Extras: Only here does this disc falter, with nothing but a making of... doco and deleted scenes. The film deserves much more. **DR**

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Extras	★★☆☆☆
Movie	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★★☆

THE INSIDER

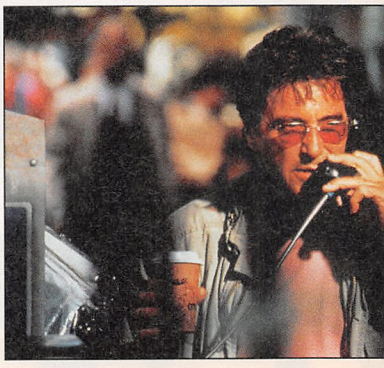
Region: 2 (PAL)
Presentation: Widescreen 1.85:1, anamorphic, Dolby Digital 5.1
Price: £15.99
Starring: Al Pacino, Russell Crowe, Christopher Plummer, Gina Gershon
Director: Michael Mann
Movie: *The Insider* is the true story of how sacked scientist Jeff Wigland (Crowe) met crusading journalist Lowell Bergman (Pacino) and the two men attempted to expose the truth about tobacco addiction. Wigland soon discovers that trying to discredit his former employers is about as good for his health as smoking, and his domestic life falls apart.

A respected producer for one of the US's top current affairs TV programmes (*60 Minutes*), Bergman too discovers how powerful the corporate giants can be. As gripping a story as any fictional thriller, this movie is first-class entertainment.

Transfer: Superb. Much of the movie takes place at night and the ability of modern filmstocks to cope with low light is fully realised on the transfer to small screen. Sound is fully involving, although the dialogue is sometimes hard to pick out against background noise.

Extras: Since the movie is 151min long there isn't much room for extras. The only bonus of any note is a production short which features the real Wigland and Bergman. **AJ**

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★☆
Extras	★★☆☆☆
Movie	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★



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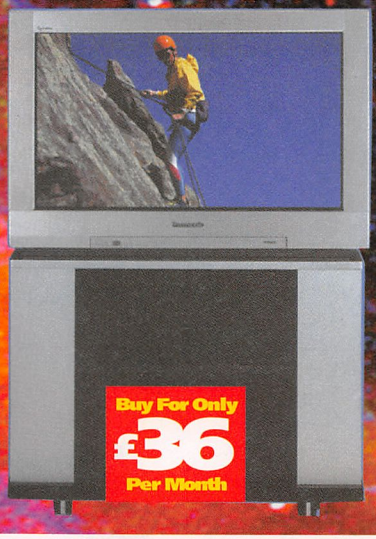

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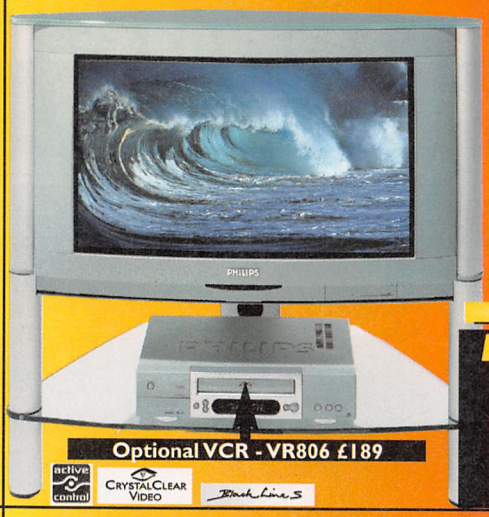

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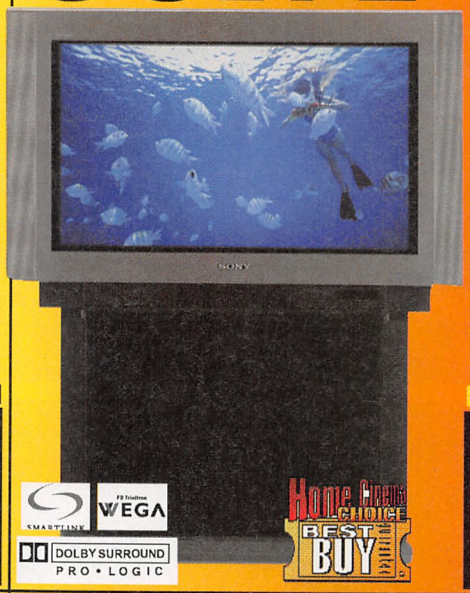

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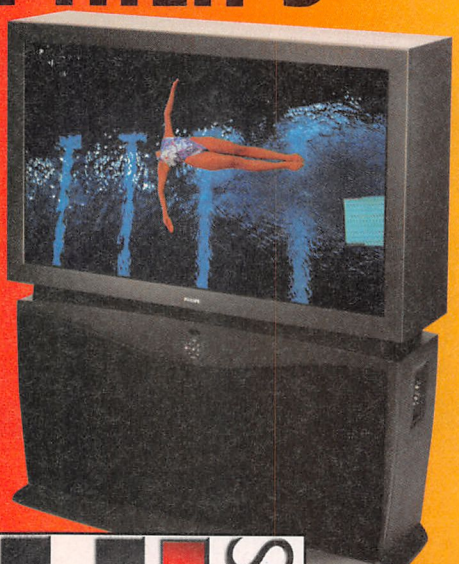

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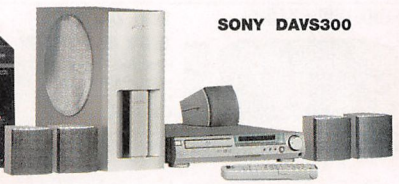
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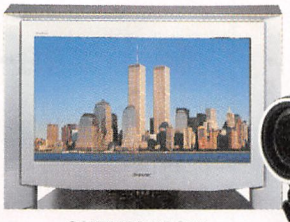
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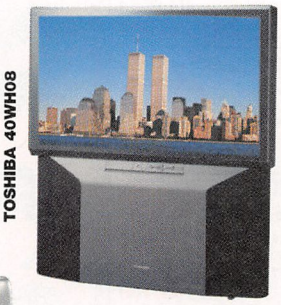
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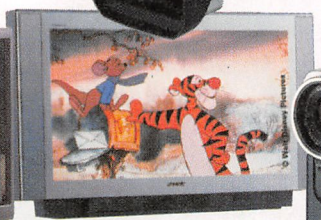
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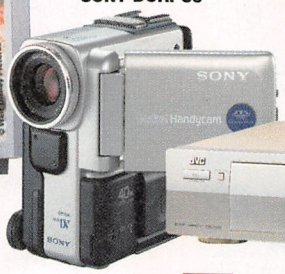

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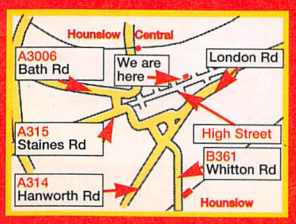

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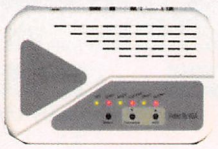

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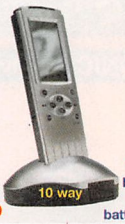

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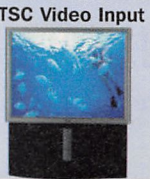

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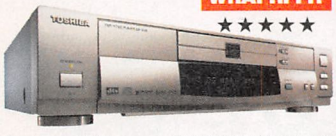

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• 2 scarts (includes 1 with RGB and Y/C)

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• Virtual Dolby Surround • Dolby Digital/DTS output
• 2 scarts (includes 1 with RGB and Y/C)
• Optical and Coaxial output
• Jog and shuttle with illumination

MULTI REGION
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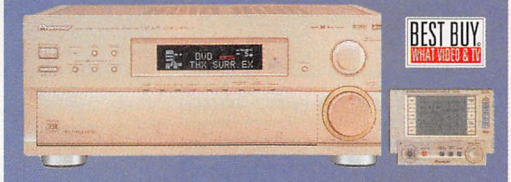

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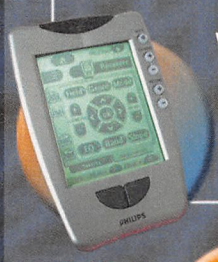

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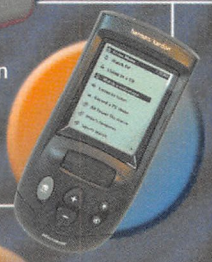

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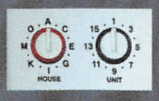

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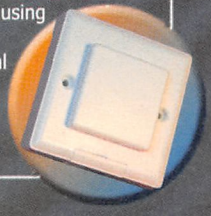

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X10 HOME AUTOMATION MODULES

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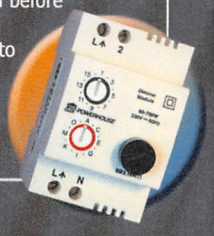

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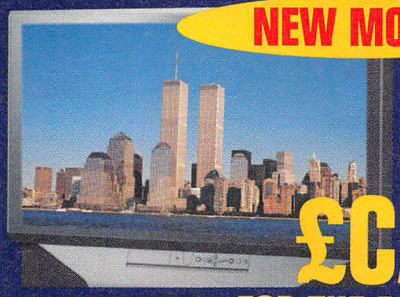

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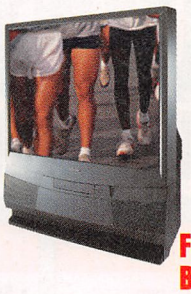

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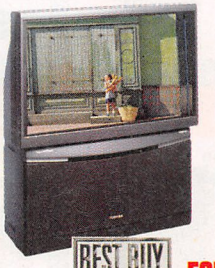

- 40" Dolby Digital Widescreen Projection TV
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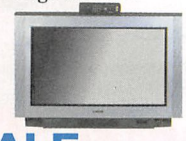

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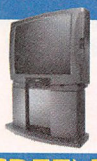

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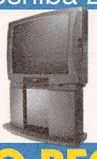

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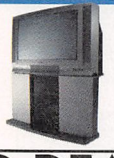

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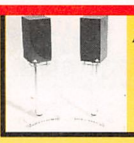

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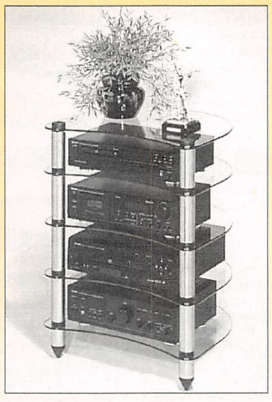

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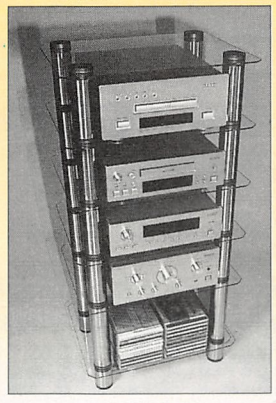

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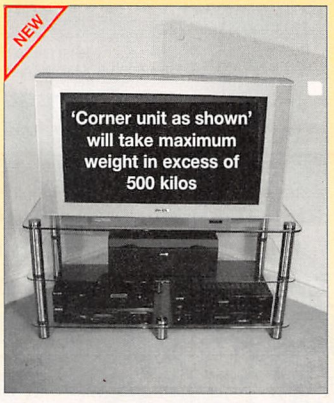

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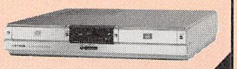
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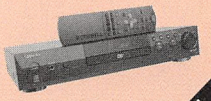
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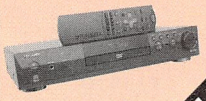
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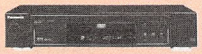
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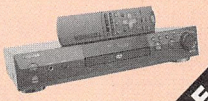
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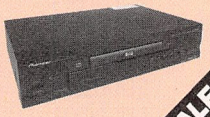
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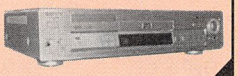
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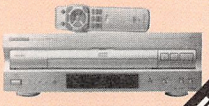
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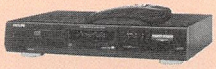
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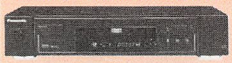
PANASONIC DVD RV60EBS

- DVD player
- Dolby Digital/DTS decoder
- 54 MHz video encoder

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TOSHIBA SD200E
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- DVD player
- Twin tray
- Dolby digital decoder
- DTS output
- Coaxial/optical digital output

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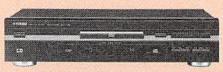
YAMAHA DVPS796

- DVD player
- Dolby Digital/DTS output

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- Portable DVD player

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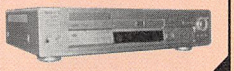
SONY DVPS 335 DVPS 336

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PHILIPS DVD755

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- DVD player
- Dolby Digital/DTS decoder
- 54 MHz video encoder
- DVD audio

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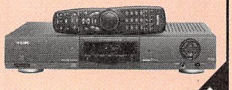
PHILIPS DVD 950 DVD 750

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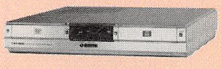
HITACHI DVP 505

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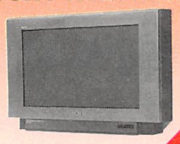
SONY KV28FX60



- 32" • 100Hz
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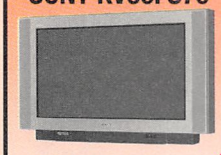

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- Dolby prologic

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- DRC 100Hz
- Nicam

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DVP-F5
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DCR-TRV320
DCR-TRV620
DCR-TRV820
DCR-PC2
DCR-PC3
DCR-PC100
DCR-TRV6
DCR-TRC11
DCR-TRV20
DCR-TRV900
DCR-VX1000
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SA-VE505
SA-VE705

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- Front AV
- VideoPlus/PDC

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- DTS • AC3
- 5x100 watts per channel
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SONY KV-28DS20 28"

- On Digital Tuner
- Pure Flat
- Dolby Prologic

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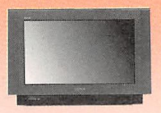

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- Pure Flat
- Nicam

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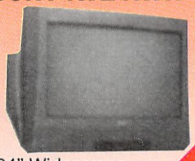

- 24" Widescreen
- Nicam (pic not exact)

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SONY TA-E9000ES

- Top End ES Pre-Amp
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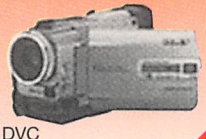

- DVC
- 3.5" LCD screen
- Memory stick
- Nightshot

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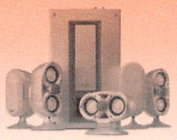
SONY SAVE705



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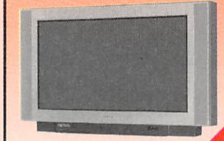

- 28" pureflat
- Dolby Prologic

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SONY KV-21X5 21"
KV-25X5 25"
KV-29X5 29"

- Nicam
- 2x Scart
- Front AV
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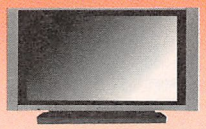

- 42" Plasma Screen
- Multi System Compatible

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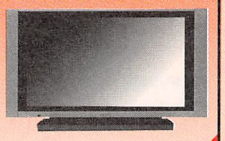

- 37" Plasma Screen
- Multi System Compatible

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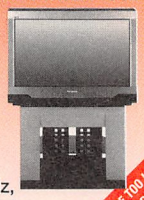
PANASONIC TX32PF10 32"



- 100Hz, Pure Flat

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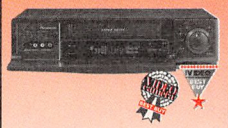

- S-VHS • 4 Head • Jog shuttle • Nicam • Video plus with PDC edit controller

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- 32" Pure flat
- Nicam stereo

Also Available TX28PK1

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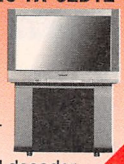

- 32" Wide-screen
- On-Digital decoder
- Nicam
- Pure Flat Screen

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PANASONIC TX28DK2 28" TX32DK2 32"

- Dolby Prologic
- Front AV
- 2x Scart

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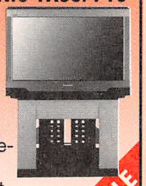

- 36" Wide-screen
- Pure Flat
- Dolby Prologic

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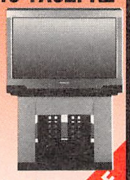

- 32" Pure Flat
- Dolby Pro Logic

Also TX28PK2

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PANASONIC TX32PK20

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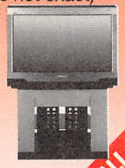

- 32" Pure flat
- 100Hz digital scan
- Nicam

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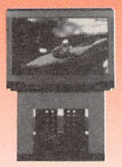

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DVD RV40EBS	**CAMCORDERS**	NVM55B	NVDS35B
DVD RV60EBS	NVRZ1B	NVDS12B	NVDS55B
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- 150x zoom
- 2.5" LCD screen
- Image stabilizer
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As NVDS35B plus:

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- Video Plus PDC
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- Nicam
- Front AV
- 2x Scart

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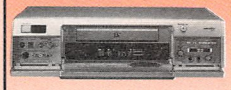
PANASONIC NV DV10000B



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- NTSC Playback

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- Pure Flat Screen
- On Digital Decoder
- Nicam

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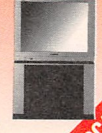

- Nicam
- Fastext
- Front AV

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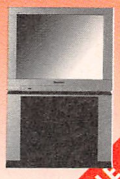
PANASONIC TX29AK1



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- Nicam

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- 400X zoom
- DV out
- Motion sensor
- 2.5" screen

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- Progressive photoshot
- Multi-media card adaptability
- 4MB MMC supplied

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- 4 head
- S-VHS
- Jog shuttle
- Video Plus
- NTSC playback

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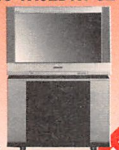
PANASONIC TX28DK1 28" PANASONIC TX32DK1 32"



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- Front AV
- 2x Scart

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- S-VHS

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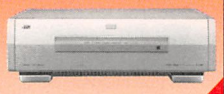
JVC HM-DR10000H



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- 100Hz
- 32" WIDESCREEN
- PIC IN PIC

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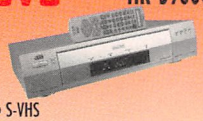
JVC HR-S9600



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- TIME BASE CORRECTOR
- INSERT EDIT
- AUDIO DUB

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- ON SCREEN DISPLAY
- NTSC PLAYBACK
- FRONT AV

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- 4 HEAD
- DYNAMIC DRUM
- INSERT EDIT
- AUDIO DUB

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- D-12A

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XV-521BK
XV-M557GD
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GR-DVL100
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GR-DVX9
GR-DVX10
GR-DVL9200
GR-DVL9700
GR-DVL9800

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- TBC
- S-VHS • EDIT
- VIDEOPLUS & PDC
- NICAM • FRONT AV
- JOG SHUTTLE

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- S-VHS
- 4 HEAD
- NICAM
- VIDEOPLUS WITH PDC
- ON SCREEN DISPLAY

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JVC AV-32WFRI

- 32" WIDESCREEN
- SUPERFLAT TUBE
- 100HZ
- TWIN TUNERS

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- 28" WIDESCREEN
- SILVER
- CABINET
- STAND

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- 28" PURE FLAT
- 100HZ
- NICAM

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- JOG/SHUTTLE
- TBC

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JVC AV-28WR4

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- NICAM
- FASTEXT
- 20W RMS OUTPUT

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- PURE FLAT
- DOLBY PRO LOGIC

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HITACHI C36WF810TN

- 36" WIDESCREEN
- PURE FLAT
- 100HZ
- PROGRESSIVE SCAN
- DOLBY DIGITAL

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HITACHI 32W35TN

- 32" WIDESCREEN
- PROGRESSIVE SCAN
- 100Hz
- DOLBY PROLOGIC
- 38W RMS OUTPUT
- CABINET

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- DOLBY DIGITAL
- TWIN LASER

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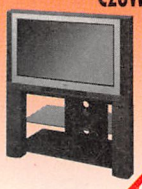

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- ANALOGUE/DIGITAL TUNERS
- DOLBY PROLOGIC
- 68W RMS OUTPUT
- CABINET

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- TAPE NAVIGATOR
- JOG/SHUTTLE
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- SATELLITE CONTROL
- NTSC PLAYBACK
- COMMERCIAL ADVANCE

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C2121T
C2156TN
C2556TN
C2856TN
C2186TN
C2586TN
C2886TN

WIDESCREEN TV
C24W511TN
C24W1TN
C28W410TN
C28W510TN
C28W1TN
C28WD2TN
C32WA2TN
C32WA2TNP
C32W35TN
C28W40DTN
C32W40DTN
C28WF523N
C32WF523N
C32WF810TN
C36WF810TN

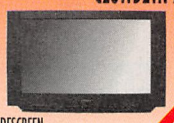
PROJECTOR TV
C43WP910TN
C55WP910TN

PLASMA
C42WL920TN

VIDEO
VT-MX810E
VT-MX835E
VT-FX850E
VT-FX860E
VT-FX880E

DVD
DV-P250E

HITACHI C32WD2TN 32" C28WD2TN 28"



- WIDESCREEN
- DOLBY PROLOGIC
- VGA INPUT
- CABINET

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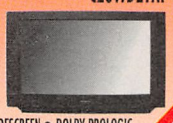
HITACHI C32WD2TNP 32" C28WD2TNP 28"



- WIDESCREEN • DOLBY PROLOGIC
- 68W RMS OUTPUT • VGA INPUT
- POWER CONSOL
- CABINET

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HITACHI C28W1TN

- 28" WIDESCREEN
- NICAM
- 20W RMS OUTPUT
- FRONT AV
- TWIN SCARTS

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HITACHI DVWIE

- TWIN TRAY DVD/CAR

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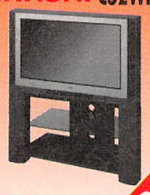

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- 100HZ WITH PROGRESSIVE SCAN
- DOLBY DIGITAL
- DTS

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- WIDESCREEN
- 100HZ
- PROGRESSIVE SCAN
- DOLBY DIGITAL
- 105W RMS

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- 24" WIDESCREEN
- NICAM
- FASTEXT
- 20W RMS OUTPUT

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- ANALOGUE/DIGITAL TUNERS
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- 68W RMS OUTPUT
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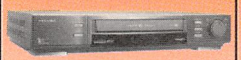

- 4 HEAD NICAM
- VIDEO PLUS WITH PAL
- JOG & SHUTTLE • INSERT EDIT
- AUDIO DUB • SATELLITE CONTROL
- STEREO NTSC PLAYBACK CAPABLE
- PICTURE ENHANCING DNR
- ON SCREEN DISPLAY
- FRONT AV

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- 33" FST SCREEN
- 5 SPEAKER DOLBY PRO-LOGIC
- 55W RMS OUTPUT
- 5 MODE DSP
- SUBWOOFER
- INVAR MASK
- MATCHING CABINET

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- 43" REAR PROJECTOR
- 4:3 SCREEN
- 28W RMS OUTPUT
- NTSC PLAYBACK

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Toshiba 40PWO3B

- 40" PROJECTOR
- 100Hz
- NICAM

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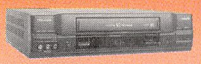
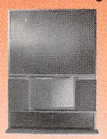
Toshiba Z8Z07



- 4 HEAD NICAM
- VIDEO PLUS WITH PDC
- SATELLITE CONTROL
- STEREO NTSC PLAYBACK CAPABLE
- AUDIO DUB
- ON SCREEN DISPLAY

Toshiba 50PJ98DB



- 50" REAR PROJECTOR
- 4:3 SCREEN
- 50w RMS OUTPUT
- DOLBY PROLOGIC
- NTSC PLAYBACK

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Toshiba 40PW8

- 40" WIDESCREEN
- DOLBY DIGITAL
- 50 WATTS RMS

RRP £3000

PRICE TOO LOW TO PRINT

Toshiba 32WD98B 28WD98B

- 32" SUPERFLAT WIDESCREEN
- INVAR MASK
- 100HZ
- 5 SPEAKER DOLBY PRO-LOGIC
- 55W RMS OUTPUT • SUBWOOFER
- BUILT IN CENTRE SPEAKER
- 5 MODE DSP
- NTSC VIDEO PLAYBACK
- CABINET
- AC3

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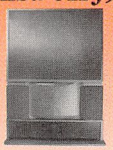
Toshiba 61PJ98DB



- 61" REAR PROJECTOR
- 4.3 SCREEN
- 50W RMS OUTPUT
- NTSC VIDEO PLAYBACK

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Toshiba 2987DB

BEST BUY WHAT VIDEO & TV

- 28" FST SCREEN
- 5 SPEAKER DOLBY PRO-LOGIC
- 55W RMS OUTPUT
- 5 MODE DSP
- SUBWOOFER
- INVAR MASK
- MATCHING CABINET

ALSO 3387DB/ 3787DB

PRICE TOO LOW TO PRINT

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- NICAM VCR

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Toshiba DVD PLAYERS

SD2109
SD3109
SD9000

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Toshiba 3787DB 3387DB 2987DB

- 37" FST SCREEN
- DOLBY PRO-LOGIC
- 100 WATTS RMS
- NTSC PLAYBACK

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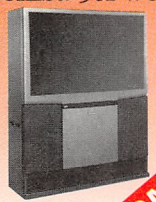
Toshiba 56PW8DB



- 56" WIDESCREEN

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Toshiba 32ZD98B

- 32" WIDESCREEN
- PURE FLAT
- 100Hz PICTURE
- DOLBY DIGITAL DECODER
- 65w RMS OUTPUT

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Toshiba 28W93

- 28" Widescreen
- Nicam

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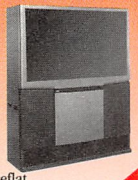
Toshiba 32Z6B



- Pureflat
- 100 Hz
- Nicam

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Toshiba 28Z05B

- Pureflat
- Nicam

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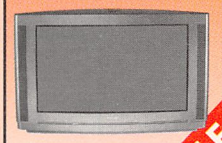
PHILIPS 32DW9625



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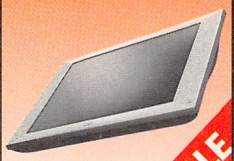
PHILIPS 42PF9952



- FLAT TV

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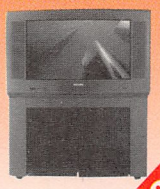
PHILIPS 32PW9616



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- TIME BASE CORRECTOR
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- NICAM
- 4 HEAD
- VIDEOPLUS WITH PDC
- EDITING
- NTSC PLAYBACK

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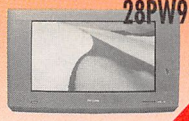
PHILIPS 36PW9525 32PW9525 28PW9525



- 36" PURE FLAT
- 100 Hz
- DOLBY DIGITAL

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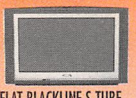
PHILIPS 32PW6515



- REAL FLAT BLACKLINE-S TUBE
- CRYSTAL CLEAR III
- TOP CONTROLS
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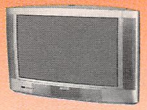

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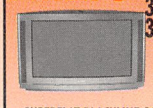

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- INCREDIBLE SURROUND

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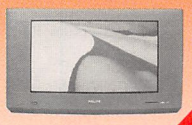

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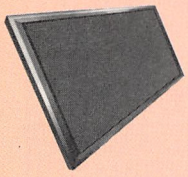

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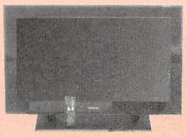

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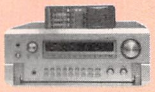

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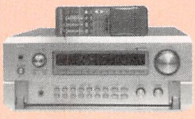

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- DTS

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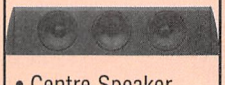

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- 25" Nicam

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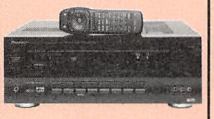
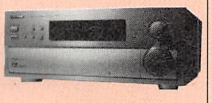


- AC3/DTS
- RDS Receiver

£SALE

PIONEER VSAE07



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- AC3/DTS
- THX

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AE200	POA
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AV50

B&W

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DM601	POA
DM602	POA
DM603	POA
DM604	POA
P4/P5	POA
PC	POA

DS6	POA

CENTRE

C100	POA
CC3	POA
CC6	POA
MATRIX HTM	POA

SUBWOOFERS

PB100	POA
AS6	POA
ASW1000	POA
ASW2000	POA
ASW3000	POA

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UC5000	POA
UC5500	POA
UC850	POA
UCX10	POA
UCX40	POA
UCX45	POA

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SURROUND TWO	POA
SURROUND ONE	POA
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ARTINA	POA
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OMEGA 3	POA

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SW410E	POA
SW708	POA
SW1008	POA
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CM42	POA
CM52	POA
CM62	POA

L100	POA
TLX-100	POA
TLX-111	POA
TLX-121	POA
TLX-171	POA
TLX-181	POA
TLX-AV5	POA
TLX-103	POA

CENTRE

MR CENTRE	POA
TLX103	POA
SC305	POA

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PSW1200	POA

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Q55	POA
Q65	POA
Q75	POA
CRESTA 2	POA
CODA 7	POA
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CODA 8	POA
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THX SPEAKERS

TDM 23F	POA
TDM 23C	POA
TDM 45B	POA
TDM 34DS	POA

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MODEL 55S	POA
MODEL 60S	POA

DIPOLE SURROUNDS

MODEL 65DS	POA

CENTRE SPEAKERS

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MODEL Q95C	POA
MODEL 100C	POA
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30B	POA

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MONITOR TWO	POA
MONITOR THREE	POA
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702 PMC	POA
703 PMC	POA
705 PMC	POA
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STUDIO 12	POA
STUDIO 20	POA
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CC300	POA
CC900	POA
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701	POA
702	POA
703	POA
704	POA
70c1	POA
70c2	POA

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772	POA
773E	POA
774	POA
775	POA
77C1	POA
77DS	POA

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751F	POA
752F	POA

753F	POA
75C	POA

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CT-21AV1BD	POA
C2557	POA
C25D7B	POA
C28S7B	POA
C28D7B	POA
CT33-B3STX	POA

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TV/VIDEO COMBI

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VIDEO

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VSA-805S	POA
VSX-407RDS	POA
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VSX-708RDS	POA
VSX-804RDS	POA
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CS175	POA

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FX500	POA
RTFX	POA

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RTE1000P	POA
RTE800	POA
RTE600	POA
RTE55	POA
RTE35	POA
RT3000P	POA
RT2000P	POA
RT1000P	POA
RT800	POA
RT600	POA
RT400	POA
RT55	POA
RT35	POA
RT25	POA
RT15	POA
M3II	POA
M1	POA

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AB855	POA
AB755	POA
AB710	POA
AB555	POA
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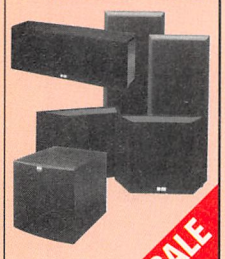
RB 985	POA
RMB-1095	POA
RSP-985	POA

KEF THX SPEAKER PACKAGE



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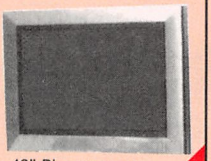

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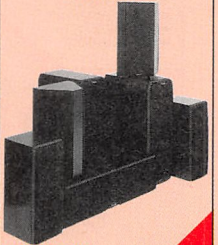

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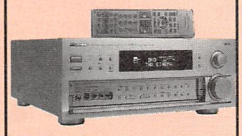

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- THX ULTRA
- Receiver
- AC3/DTS

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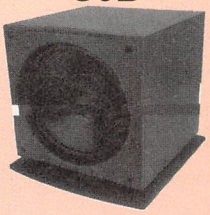

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RSX-965RDS	POA	KV-24WX1	POA	SATURN S8C	POA	TV	
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CCD-TRV 94E		MERCURY M1	POA	SA-AX530	POA	28MW7DB	POA
CCD-SC55E		MERCURY M2.5	POA	SA-AX730	POA	28W8DB	POA
DCR-PC7		MERCURY M3	POA	SA-AX930	POA	28W93DB	POA
TV		MERCURY MR	POA	SA-AX6	POA	28WD98B	POA
KV-21X1	POA	MERCURY MC	POA	SA-AX7	POA	32MW7DB	POA
KV-25F1	POA	MERCURY MM	POA	**THOMSON**		32W8DB	POA
KV-25K1	POA	MERCURY MSUB10	POA	WIDESCREEN		32WD98DB	POA
KV-25X1	POA	REVOLUTION R1	POA	60DXC-68U	POA	32ZD98DB	POA
KV-29F1	POA	REVOLUTION R2	POA	70DXC-68U	POA	PROJECTOR TV	
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48PJ6DB	POA		
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56PW8DB	POA		
61PJ98B	POA		
DVD PLAYERS			
SD2109	POA		
SD3109	POA		
SD9000	POA		
VIDEO RECORDERS			
V226B	POA		
V229B	POA		
V429B	POA		
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YAMAHA			
DSP-A492	POA		
DSP-A592	POA		
RX-V392	POA		
RX-V592	POA		
DSP-E492	POA		
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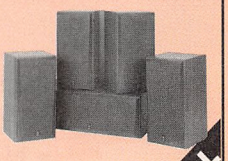

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- 100w
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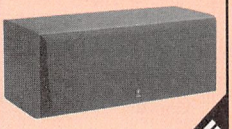

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- 70w
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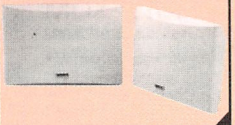

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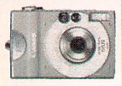

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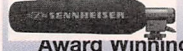

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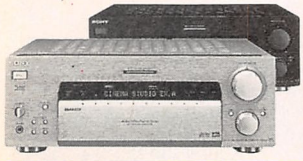

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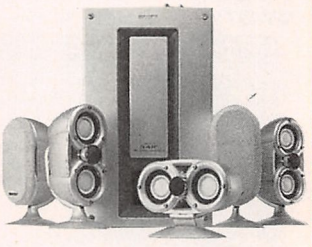

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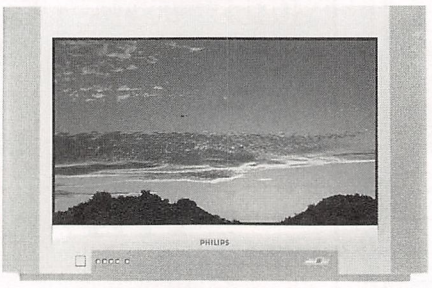

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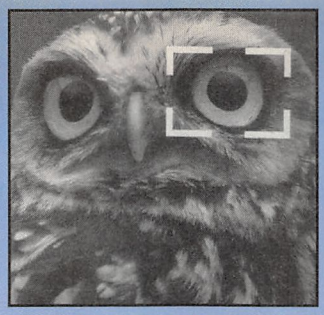

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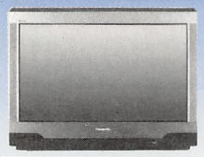

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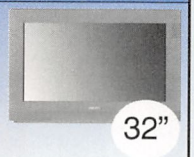

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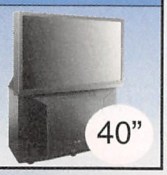

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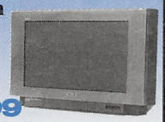

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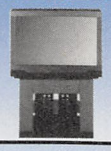

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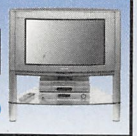

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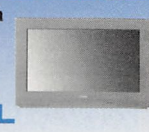

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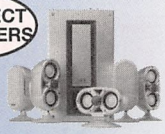

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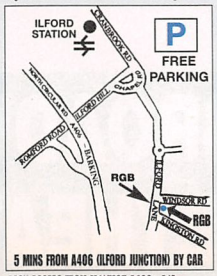

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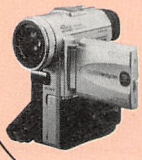

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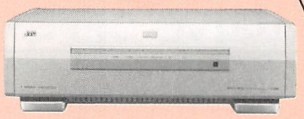

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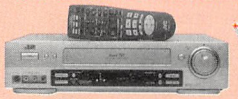

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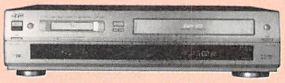

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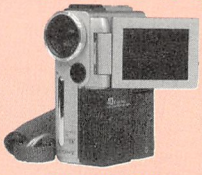

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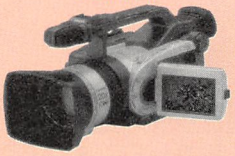

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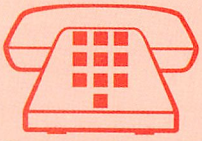

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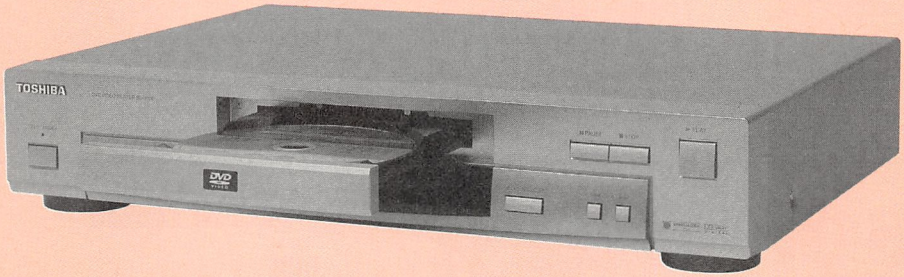

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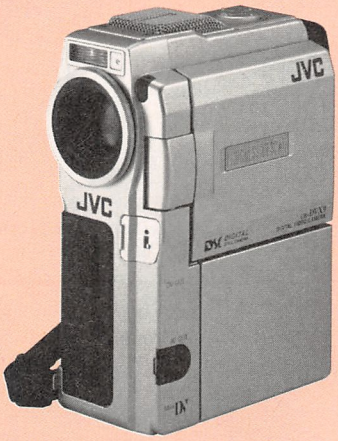

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KV29X5
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KV29FX20
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KV28FX60
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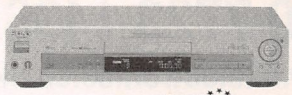

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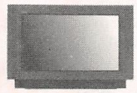

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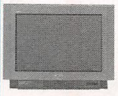

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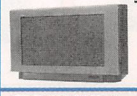

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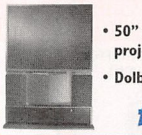

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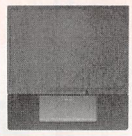

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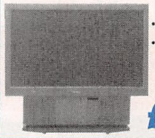

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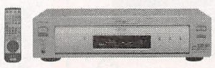

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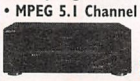

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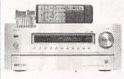

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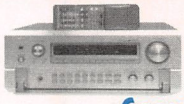

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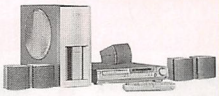

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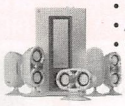

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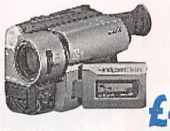

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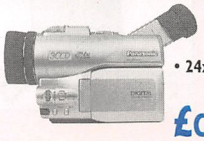

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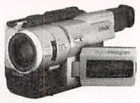

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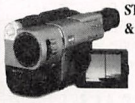

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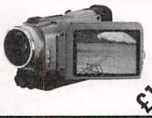

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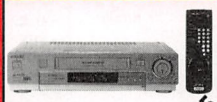

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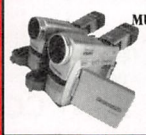

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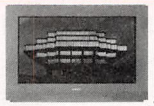

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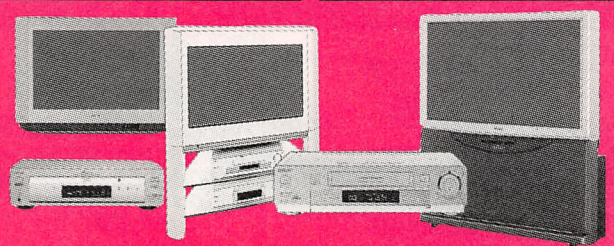

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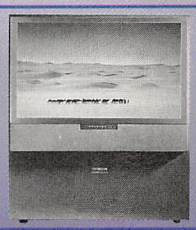

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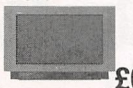
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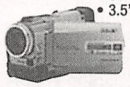
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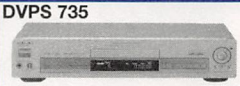
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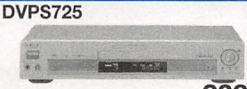
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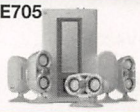
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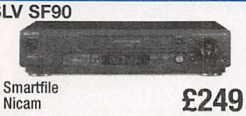
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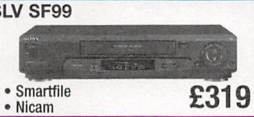
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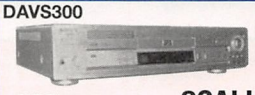
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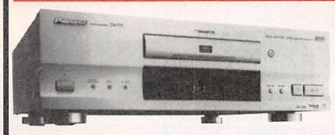

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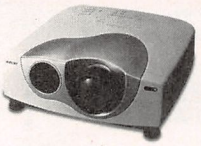

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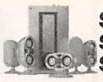

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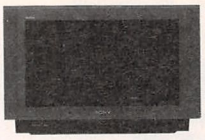

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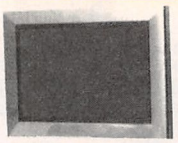

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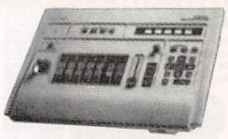

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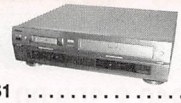

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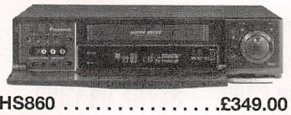

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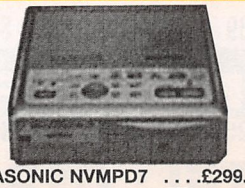

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PC5 £999
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DVPS 725D
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- Link (DV out)

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DCR-TR8000

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- LP recording
- 2.5" LCD screen (123K dots)
- Super SteadyShot (800k CCD)
- Super Nightshot 0 Lux
- Playback zoom
- Link (DV out)
- Super Laser Link

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CCD-TRV87

- Video Hi8 XR
- 2.5" LCD screen (61K dots)
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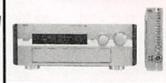
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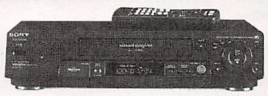

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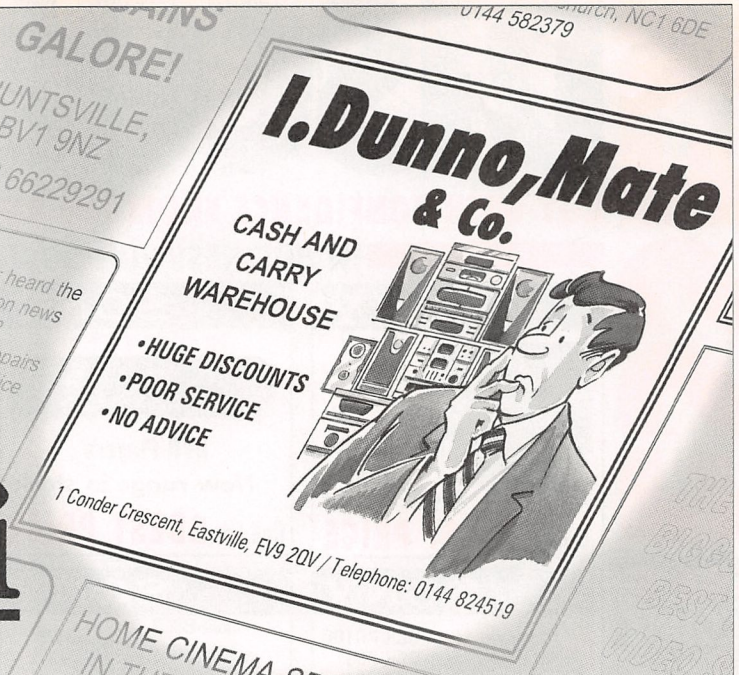

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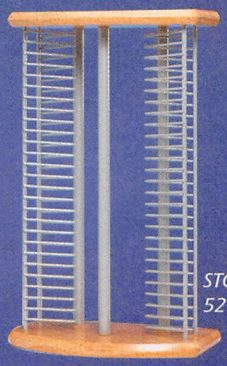

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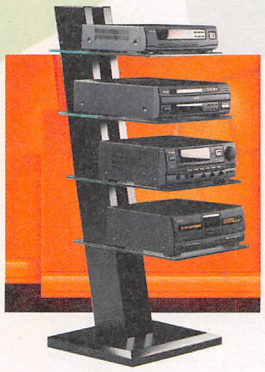

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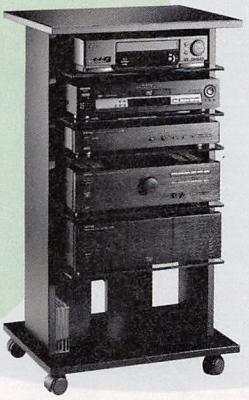

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TX32PK20	£1099.99
TX32DT2	£1049.99
TX32PK2	£999.99
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TX32DK1	£679.99
TX28PK10	£819.99
TX28DT2	£774.99
TX28PK2	£699.99
TX28PK3	£619.99
TX28PK1	£619.99
TX28DK2	£549.99
TX28DK1	£469.99
TX24DX1	£359.99
TX21CK1	£199.99
TX28CK1	£339.99
TX25CK1	£299.99
TX21JT1	£179.99
TX21GV1	£299.99
TX14GV1	£249.99
TXG10	£199.99

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VTFX880 £259.99

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Panasonic DIGITAL CAMCORDER

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NVDS35B	£889.99
NVEX3B	£849.99
NVDS25B	£689.99
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NVDS15B	£589.99
NVDS12B	£489.99

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PIONEER DVL919	£699.99
SONY DVPS735	£469.99
SONY DVPS7700	£599.99
AKAI DVP4000	£229.99
TOSHIBA SD100	£229.99
PANASONIC RV20	£299.99
HITACHI DVP505	£299.99
PIONEER DV525	£229.99
PIONEER DV717	£469.99
PIONEER PDVLC/D	£699.99
LG 3200	£129.99
SONY DVPS335	£279.99

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SCEH560	£329.99
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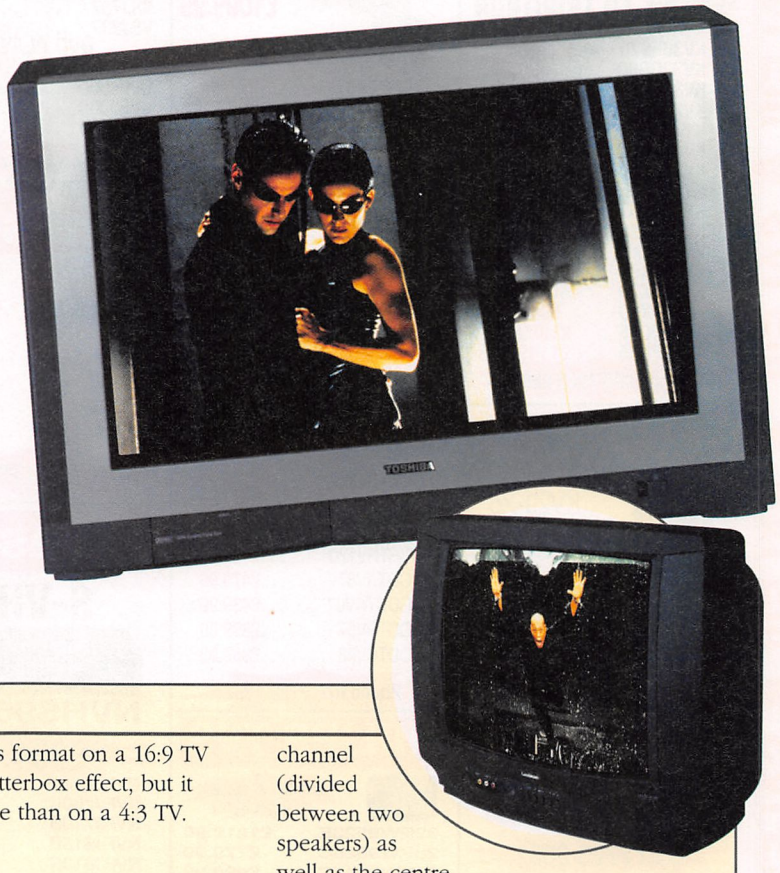
BUYERS' GUIDE

Your guide to the world of TVs, video recorders, DVD players, camcorders, home cinema audio and much more



Until recently there wasn't much difference between TVs except size, teletext and Nicam stereo sound. Now there's widescreen, flatscreen, Dolby Pro-Logic and Dolby Digital. The same applies to VCRs, which will now join camcorders in the digital realm and soon the whole process of using cassettes will be replaced by hard drive recorders and rewriteable DVD. Here are a few basic pointers to accompany our *Buyers' Guide* pages.

PRICES

The prices that we quote are typical retail prices. Since the abolition of recommended retail prices for certain consumer electronics items, prices can vary widely (and occasionally pricing for brand-new products is difficult to find until they reach retailers). If you look through the advertisers in the magazine, you will probably be able to find products selling for far less. If this does happen, then use your own judgement to make an upgrade to our value ratings.

TVs

4:3 SCREEN RATIO

The traditional, almost square shape of screen still used for a large number of TV broadcasts. Due to their proliferation, these kinds of sets are the cheapest, especially if you choose no-frills models, although features like teletext and Nicam stereo are now almost standard. A drawback is that on smaller screen sizes, widescreen programming must be viewed in 'letterbox' format, making the actual image size comparatively less. Most DVD films, for example, are only available in widescreen.

16:9 WIDESCREEN RATIO

Widescreen sets are fast catching up and will eventually be the norm. A large (eg 32in) 16:9 ratio screen will produce an image height similar to a 25in 4:3 TV, but of course will have extra width – ideal for watching films (if broadcast in widescreen or played from widescreen video or disc). Prices are generally higher than for 4:3 TVs, but there are already examples of bargain widescreen sets. Remember to check the number and type of connections, such as Scart sockets, etc and make sure they are adequate for your needs.

NB: cinema ratios vary and the widest currently in use, the Cinemascope or Panavision type, is actually 2.35:1 (or 21:9). Watching films in this format on a 16:9 TV will still result in a letterbox effect, but it will be less noticeable than on a 4:3 TV.

PROJECTION SYSTEMS

For when size really does matter, rear-projection TVs (or alternatively, video projectors plus a cinema-style screen) are the most cost-effective way to go. Plasma TVs and other flatscreen technology has yet to establish itself as a consumer proposition due to the sheer cost. Rear-projection sets, though still rather costly, are lightweight and slimline compared to hefty cathode ray tube (CRT) TVs.

They are best suited for digitally based media such as digital TV and DVD. The large image size can exaggerate deficiencies in the picture quality and image brightness, contrast and colour convergence do not always compare well with CRT.

STEREO AND SURROUND SOUND TVs

Now a fixture of TVs and most VCRs, Nicam stereo is rapidly being overtaken by surround systems. Dolby Pro-Logic has existed for years but is still being as a state-of-the-art feature in some new TVs. This isn't really true – it only supplies one rear music/effects channel (divided between two speakers) as well as the centre channel, but in the UK for the time being, only DVD carries the superior Dolby Digital (see *Home Cinema* below).

TVs with built-in Dolby Digital are still in the minority, but the spread of DVD is changing this. TVs and players with 'pseudo-surround' manipulate stereo effects to simulate the effect of rear speakers. Some TVs offer the option of adding actual speakers as they often use Pro-Logic. Pseudo-surround is best regarded as expanded stereo and is no substitute for true surround.

INTEGRATED DIGITAL TVs

These next-generation breeds of TV will handle both standard analogue and digital broadcasting. Most are designed for terrestrial (ONdigital) use, though many come as 'free-to-air' receivers only. Modules are supposedly being developed to enable smart card (subscription channel) access, as well as possible cross-platform compatibility between digital satellite and terrestrial. IDTVs are a neat but still comparatively expensive solution given that set-top boxes are free to subscribers for the forseeable future.

VIDEO CASSETTE RECORDERS

Due to the vast numbers of VHS cassettes in existence, there's still life in the traditional VCR. Long play (LP) and Index Search are now standard features. NTSC playback compatibility is fast becoming commonplace, as are VideoPlus and PDC (programme delivery control), which make timer recording easier and more reliable. Main choices will be between audio formats (mono or stereo – the latter becoming so cheap that mono-only decks could vanish altogether) and format (VHS, the superior S-VHS and the latest enhancement – D-VHS with digital recording).

There are also the intermediate and dual-format dubbing decks that use 8mm and/or DV camcorder formats, and in some cases combine them with VHS or S-VHS. Other features on the humble VCR to consider include editing-orientated features such as front AV input, audio dubbing and jog/shuttle tape motion controls, but don't pay for these if you don't really need them.

CAMCORDERS

Camcorders used to be judged on size, but now most are palm-sized regardless of format – and most models now incorporate image stabilisation devices to counter picture shake. Some camcorders offer basic onboard editing facilities and features such as hi-fi stereo sound – decide how important these are for you.

VHS is the standard home format, and the one that virtually all pre-recorded video tapes come in. Full-sized VHS camcorders have largely been replaced by compact VHS-C and S-VHS-C versions. Adaptors mean the small cassettes will play in VHS and S-VHS VCRs respectively.

8mm formats are more compact, standard 8mm being roughly equivalent in picture quality to VHS and Hi8 to S-VHS. These can't be played in VHS decks, so they have to be viewed or copied off using the AV output of the camcorder.

The latest and best camcorder formats are DV (Digital Video) and Digital8 (from Sony). DV models from Sony, Panasonic, Canon, Samsung, Sharp and JVC, with superb sound and picture quality, are redefining both picture and sound performance.

HOME CINEMA

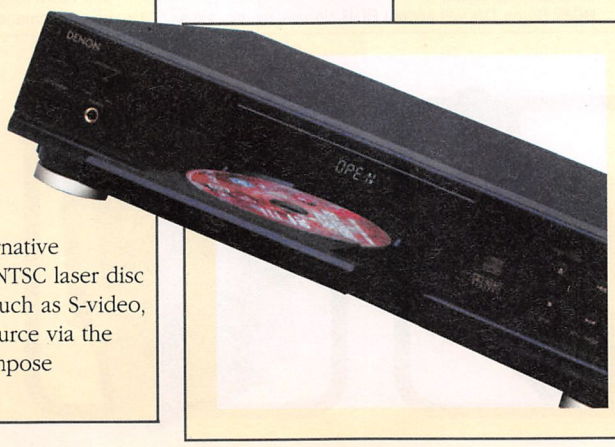
Separates-based home cinema systems inevitably offer better sound quality than all-in-one Dolby Pro-Logic TVs. If you have an existing hi-fi amplifier you'll need a separate decoder for surround sound (eg Dolby Digital). Otherwise, go for an integrated surround sound amp or a receiver (if you want a built-in radio tuner). Processors amplify the effects channels only. Subwoofers can be added to boost bass output and allow the use of less visually intrusive main-channel speakers.

THX (Tomlinson Holman's experiment) is a stringent variant of DPL. You'll need THX-rated software, decoders and speakers to benefit. Dolby's Digital format, formerly known as AC-3, offers quite spectacular results, thanks to the five channels of discrete audio, and a dedicated subwoofer channel. In the UK, only DVDs are able to offer Dolby Digital soundtracks. DTS is another alternative 5.1-channel format available on NTSC laser disc and a few DVDs. Video inputs, such as S-video, are used to feed the playback source via the surround sound unit and superimpose menu/operating data on request.

DVD (DIGITAL VERSATILE DISC)

This fast-growing format has quickly replaced laser discs as the format for home entertainment with more movies, music and other material becoming available all the time. Region 2 (Europe and Japan) players are PAL- and NTSC-compatible, though unless the machine is modified it won't play Region 1 (US) titles. Nearly all players will output NTSC as pure NTSC, so ensure that your television is also NTSC-compatible as well. A small number of players (eg Samsungs) convert or partially convert NTSC to PAL.

Most players have Scart connections allowing RGB output (the best way to view discs) or S-video (the next best). Opinion is divided as to whether optical or coaxial digital output is best for connecting to Dolby Digital/DTS surround sound systems. Players with 5.1-channel outputs mean that a separate Dolby Digital decoder isn't necessary, just a surround sound amplifier with suitable inputs.



All DVD players should play CDs and Video CDs, though only a few models will play back recordable or re-recordable CD media (for those who burn their own CDs). Certain players have compatibility problems with certain discs (eg: *The Matrix*). Most of these have now been resolved but check our reviews before buying a player ❐

TELEVISIONS

4:3 NICAM TELEVISIONS 28IN-32IN

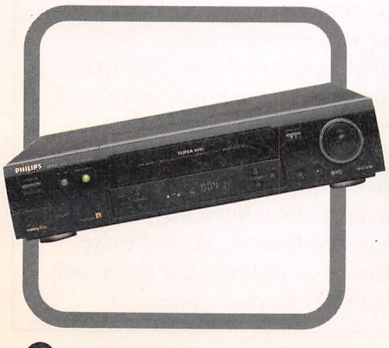
PAL/ NTSC 3.58	MODEL	SCREEN SIZE	SCART	S-VIDEO	FRONT AV IN	AUDIO OUT	EXT SPEAK TERMS	RGB	100HZ	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Multi	Akai TV2851	28in	2	●	●	●		●		Extremely good value set. BB	Nov 98	£400	9
Multi	Akai TV2835	28in	2	●				●		–	N/A	£350	
	Bush 2871NTX	28in	1								N/A	£250	
	Bush 2868 NTX	28in	1							Available from Argos as the 2874NTX	N/A	£250	
Pal/N	Daewoo GB2898ST	28in	2	●	●			●		Excellent picture, very good value	Feb 98	£400	9
Multi	Ferguson M7021U	29in	2	●						–	N/A		
Multi	Ferguson M7022U	28in	2	●	●					–	N/A		
Pal/N	Goodmans 289NS	28in	2	●	●			●		Okay performer but poor NTSC display	Nov 00	£250	7
Multi	Grundig M72-410/9REF	29in	3		●	●				–	N/A		
Multi	Grundig ST70-270/8	28in	2	●	●					–	N/A		
Multi	Grundig ST70-700NIC	28in	2							–	N/A	£370	
Pal/N	Hitachi C2856TN	28in	2	●	●	●				–	N/A	£375	
Pal/N	JVC AV-29BD3	29in	2	●	●			●		–	N/A	£460	
Pal/N	JVC AV-29BD3EK	29in	2	●	●			●		–	N/A	£460	
Multi	Mitsubishi C28C7B	28in	2	●		●		●		No real weaknesses. BB	Jan 98	£570	9
Pal/N	Panasonic TX-28MD4	28in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£500	
Pal/N	Panasonic TX-28XD3	28in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£550	
Pal/N	Panasonic TX-29AD2	29in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£600	
Pal/N	Panasonic TX-29AK1	29in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
PAL	Philips 28PT4475	28in	2	●	●			●		–	N/A		
Multi	Samsung CI683CN	28in	2		●			●		–	N/A	£380	
	Sanyo 25DN5	25in	2		●					–	N/A	£300	
	Sanyo 28DN5	28in	2		●					–	N/A	£380	
Pal/N	Sharp 66-ESO3H	28in	2	●				●		–	N/A	£380	
Pal/N	Sharp 66GS-62H	28in	2	●		●		●		–	N/A	£	
Pal/N	Sony KV-29FX20	29in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£750	
Pal/N	Sony KV-29X5	29in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£450	
Multi	Thomson 28DG24U	28in	2	●	●	●				–	N/A		
	Toshiba 2873DB	28in	2	●	●					–	N/A	£500	
Multi	Toshiba 28W93B	28in	2	●	●			●		Fantastic images and great features. BB	Jun 00	£500	

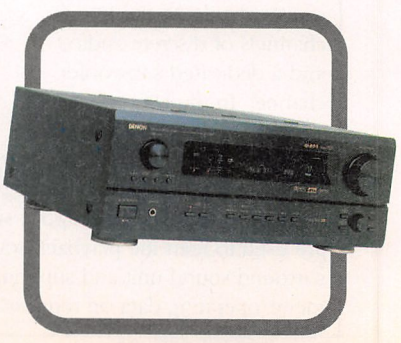
4:3 NICAM TELEVISIONS 25IN

PAL/ NTSC3.58	MODEL	SCART	S-VIDEO	FRONT AV IN	AUDIO OUT	RGB	COMMENT	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
	Bush 2571NTX	1			●		Available from Argos	N/A	£200	
	Ferguson M6322U	2	●	●			–	N/A		
PAL/N	Goodmans 255NS	2	●	●		●	Another Goodmans bargain. BB	Jan 98	£370	9
PAL/N	Hitachi C2556TN	2	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£330	
PAL/N	JVC AV-25BD3	2	●	●	●	●	–	N/A		
PAL/N	JVC AV-25TS4EK	2		●	●	●	–	N/A	£350	
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-25MD4	2	●	●	●	●	Easy to use, good picture, weak sound	Nov 98	£450	8
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-25MK1	2	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£360	
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-25XD4	2	●	●	●	●	–	N/A		
PAL	Philips 25PT4475	2	●	●		●	–	N/A		
	Samsung CI593CN	2		●		●	–	N/A	£300	
	Sanyo 25DN3	2		●			–	N/A		
PAL	Sharp 59-DSO3H	2	●				–	N/A	£330	
PAL/N	Sharp 59GS-61H	2	●		●	●	–	N/A	£	
PAL/N	Sony KV-25X5	2	●	●	●	●	–	N/A		
	Tatung T25 NE61	1					–	N/A		
	Thomson 25DG24U	2	●	●			–	N/A		
PAL/N	Toshiba 2573DB	2	●	●			–	N/A	£400	

KEY TO TELEVISIONS

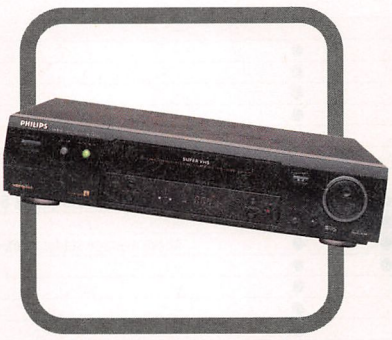
System: All UK TVs use the PAL system. Many also accept NTSC signals from American or Japanese software. If a TV is also compatible with the European Secam system, it is classed as multi-standard. If it has NTSC playback we use the PAL/N symbol.
Screen Size: Quoted screen size. The actual size, measured diagonally from one corner to the opposite corner is usually around 1.5in less.
Scart/S-video: The total amount of audio and video inputs, listed by type.
Front AV Inputs: Usually phono audio and video, sometimes S-Video inputs, for easy camcorder or video game connection.
Audio Outputs: For connecting the TV to a hi-fi or AV system.
External Speaker Terminals: For direct connection of additional speakers.
RGB: Some TVs will accept RGB signals, usually via a Scart socket, to display PC and DVD-generated images.
Test Date: If we've reviewed a TV you're interested in, you can order a copy from our Test Reprints service.
100Hz scanning: Picture is refreshed at twice the normal rate to reduce flicker.
Screen sizes: Manufacturers equivalent in cm are usually 51cm for 21in, 59cm for 25in, 68cm for 28, 70cm for 29in and 78cm for 33in And yes, we know these don't all add up mathematically.

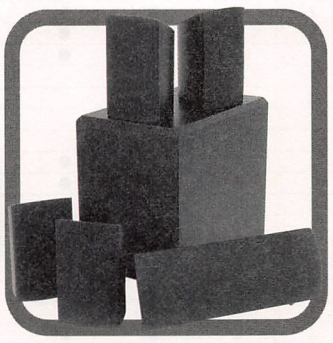




4:3 NICAM TELEVISIONS 20IN-21IN

PAL/ NTSC3.58	MODEL	SCREEN SIZE	SCART	S-VIDEO	FRONT AV IN	AUDIO OUT	RGB	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
PAL	Aiwa TV-SE211	21in	2		●			–	N/A	£230	
PAL	Aiwa TV-SE2130	21in	2		●		●	–	N/A	£230	
	Bush 2028NTX	20in	1			●		–	N/A		
	Bush 2068NTX	20in	1			●		–	N/A		
	Bush 2071NTX	20in	1			●		–	N/A		
	Bush 2167NTX	21in	1					–	N/A	£260	
	Bush 2171NTX	21in	1					–	N/A		
	Bush 2190D	21in	1					–(IDTV)	N/A	£300	
Multi	Ferguson M5518U	21in	2	●				–	N/A		
PAL/N	Goodmans 206NS	20in	2	●	●		●	Excellent value, fair performer. BB	Feb 00	£150	9
PAL	Grundig ST55-725	21in	1	●	●		●	Good value, fair performer	May 97	£320	8
PAL/N	Hitachi C2156TN	21in	2	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£220	
PAL/N	JVC AV-21TS2	21in	2	●	●		●	–	N/A	£330	
PAL	JVC AV-21TS4EK	21in	2		●	●	●	Fat-looking but boasting an excellent picture. BB	Nov 00	£250	9
PAL	Matsui 21V1N	21in	1		●			Ugly duckling with a beautiful price	Nov 97	£260	8
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-21MD4	21in	2	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£300	
PAL	Philips 21PT4475/05	21in	2	●			●	Stripped down features but good pictures and sound.	Nov 00	£220	8
PAL	Philips 21PT5505	21in	2	●			●	–	N/A	£340	
PAL/N	Samsung CI-533CN	21in	2	●	●			Improbably cheap, excellent picture. BB	Apr 00	£200	9
	Sanyo 21DN5	21in	2		●			–	N/A	£230	
PAL/N	Sharp 51GS-61H	21in	2	●		●	●	–	N/A		
PAL/N	Sony KV21X5	21in	2		●	●	●	–	N/A		
	Tatung T20 TF70	20in	1					–	N/A		
Multi	Thomson 21DK24U	21in	2	●	●			–	N/A		
	Thorn CT51 4TN	21in	2	●		●		–	N/A	£385	
PAL/N	Toshiba 2173DB	21in	2	●	●		●	–	N/A	£380	



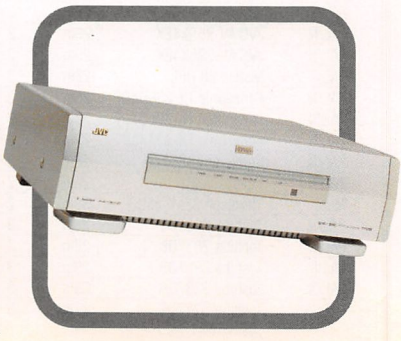


4:3 SURROUND SOUND TELEVISIONS

PAL/ NTSC 3.58	MODEL	SCREEN SIZE	SCART	S-VIDEO	FRONT AV IN	AUDIO OUT	EXT SPEAK TERMS	RGB	100Hz	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
PAL/N	Ferguson M8473NJD	33in	2	●			●	●		Great picture, good price, bad manual	Feb 98	£1,000	8
PAL/N	Goodmans 285DPL	28in	2	●			●	●		Great price and a decent performance. BB	Dec 97	£600	9
Multi	Grundig M72-410/9REF	29in	2	●		●				–	N/A		
Multi	Grundig M95-411/9REF	37in	3	●		●				–	N/A		
Multi	Grundig ST70-875DPL	28in	2	●	●					–	N/A		
Multi	Grundig ST84-896/FTLOG	33in	2	●		●				–	N/A		
PAL/N	Grundig ST63 775DPL	25in	2	●	●		●	●		Good but unspectacular	Sep 98	£600	7
PAL/N	Hitachi 2186TN	21in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£240	
PAL/N	Hitachi 2586TN	25in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£390	
PAL/N	Hitachi 2886TN	28in	2	●	●	●		●		Indifferent AV performance	Jan 98	£700	7
PAL/N	JVC AV-25SX4EK	25in	2		●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£400	
PAL/N	JVC AV-29SX4EK	29in	2		●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£500	
PAL	Matsui 28 DPL	28in	2	●	●		●			Excellent value for money	Jun 98	£500	8
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-25LD4DP	25in	2	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£520	
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-28LD4DP	28in	2	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£700	
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-33AK10	33in	3	●	●	●		●	●	–	N/A		
PAL/N	Samsung CI28C7D	28in	2		●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£400	
PAL/N	Sanyo 25XP1	25in	2	●	●	●	●	●		Sanyo's debut Pro-Logic set	Apr 97	£650	7
Multi	Thomson 33MS25UD	33in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
PAL/N	Toshiba 2557DB	25in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Good all round set. BB	Sep 98	£600	9
PAL/N	Toshiba 2877DB	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Decent picture, good features	Dec 97	£850	8
Multi	Toshiba 2987DB	29in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Good all-rounder for the price. BB	Nov 98	£850	9
PAL/N	Toshiba 3387DB	33in	3	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£1,400	
PAL/N	Toshiba 3787DB	37in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Great Dolby Digital TV. BB	Sep 98	£2,000	9

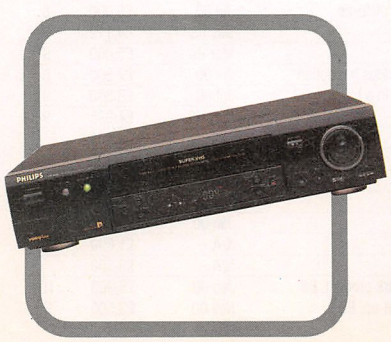
WIDESCREEN NICAM TELEVISIONS

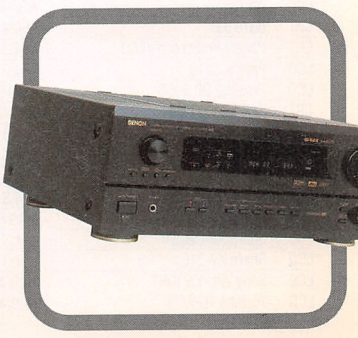
PAL/ NTSC3.58	MODEL	SCREEN SIZE	SCART	S-VIDEO	FRONT AV IN	AUDIO OUT	EXT SPEAK TERMS	RGB	100HZ	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
PAL/N	Akai TV2883	28in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£500	
PAL/N	Akai TV3283	32in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£700	
PAL/N	Bush 6690D	28in	2			●	●	●		Remarkable price for w/s IDTV. BB	Mar 00	£500	9
PAL	Bush 7690D	30in	1			●				Disappointing, though very cheap IDTV	July 00	£600	7
PAL/N	Bush WS6667	28in	2	●		●				–	N/A	£480	
PAL	Bush WS6671	28in	2		●			●		–	N/A		
PAL/N	Bush WS7667	32in	2	●		●				–	N/A	£900	
PAL/N	Bush WS7671	32in	2		●					–	N/A		
PAL/N	Ferguson W7022U	28in	2	●	●					–	N/A		
PAL/N	Goodmans W288NS	28in	2	●	●			●		Great picture at an amazing price. BB	Jul 99	£400	9
PAL/N	Goodmans W32INS	32in	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	Well featured, good looker	Aug 97	£2,000	8
Multi	Grundig MW70-2690	28in	2		●					–	N/A		
Multi	Grundig MW82-2690	32in	2		●					–	N/A	£850	
Multi	Grundig MW82-2700	32in	2							–	N/A	£950	
PAL/N	Hitachi C24W1TN	24in	2	●	●			●		–	N/A	£550	
PAL/N	Hitachi C28W1TN	28in	2	●	●			●		–	N/A	£600	
PAL/N	JVC AV-28WFT1	28in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£700	
PAL/N	JVC AV-32WFT1	32in	3	●	●	●		●		Impressive picture; pricey but worth it. BB	Aug 00	£1,000	9
PAL/N	JVC AV-32WL1	32in	3	●	●	●		●	●	Stunning looks, okay AV performance	Oct 00	£1,600	8
PAL/N	JVC AV-24WT2	24in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£400	
PAL/N	JVC AV-28WT4	28in	2	●	●	●		●		Poor features, excellent picture & sound. BB	Oct 00	£640	9
Multi	Loewe Credo 7570 ZP	28in	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	Well featured, good looker	Aug 97	£2,000	
PAL/N	LG WE32Q101P	32in		●	●	●			●	–	N/A	£1,300	
PAL/N	LG WF-32A14T	32in	2	●	●	●		●		Good audio and excellent value. BB	May 98	£1,000	9
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-28PK1	28in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£800	
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-32PK1	32in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£1,100	
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-W28R3	28in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£680	
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-36PF10	36in	3	●	●	●		●	●	–	N/A		
PAL	Philips 24PW6005	24in	2	●				●		–	N/A	£1,400	
PAL	Philips 24PW6324	24in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£1,400	
PAL	Philips 28PW6305	28in	2	●		●		●		–	N/A	£1,400	
PAL	Philips 28PW6324	28in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£1,400	
PAL	Philips 32PW6305	32in	2	●		●		●		–	N/A	£1,400	
	Philips 32PW9534D	32in	2	●	●	●				–	N/A	£1,400	
	Philips 32PW9544D	32in	2	●	●	●				–	N/A	£1,400	
PAL	Philips 32PW6324	32in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£1,400	
	Samsung WI24W6VN	24in	2		●			●		–	N/A	£400	
	Samsung WI28W6VN	28in	2		●			●		–	N/A	£530	
	Samsung WI32W6VN	32in	2		●			●		–	N/A	£800	
	Sanyo 24WN4	24in	2	●						–	N/A	£450	
	Sanyo 28WN4	28in	2	●		●				–	N/A	£550	
	Sanyo 32WN4	32in	2	●		●				–	N/A	£750	
PAL/N	Schneider 2816	28in	2				●			Marvellous picture quality. BB	Apr 99	£300	9
PAL/N	Sharp 56FW-53H	24in	3	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£380	
PAL/N	Sharp 66FW-53H	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Above average set for a reasonable price	Oct 00	£500	8
PAL/N	Sharp 76FW-53H	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£750	
PAL/N	Sharp 66GF-63H	28in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
PAL/N	Sony KV-24WX1	24in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£480	
Multi	Sony KV-28FC60Z	28in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
PAL/N	Sony KV-28FX20	28in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£800	
Multi	Sony KV-28FX60	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Excellent picture, good price. BB	Apr 99	£1,100	9
Multi	Sony KV-32FC60Z	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A		
Multi	Sony KV-32FQ75U	32in	3	●	●	●		●		Glorious Art Couture DRC-MF set. BB	Oct 00	£1,700	10
PAL/N	Sony KV-32FX20	32in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£1,100	
Multi	Sony KV-32FX60	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A		
PAL/N	Tatung T28440	28in	2	●			●			Excellent entry-level set. BB	Jul 99	£550	9
Multi	Thomson 24WK23U	24in	2	●	●					–	N/A		
Multi	Thomson 24WT25ES	24in	2	●		●				First DVD-playing TV. Great product. BB	Sept 00	£700	9
Multi	Thomson 28VK24U	28in	2	●	●					–	N/A		
Multi	Thomson 32VK24U	32in	2	●	●					–	N/A		
PAL/N	Toshiba 28W93B	28in	2	●	●			●		Great features and a fantastic image. BB	June 2000	£500	9
PAL/N	Toshiba 28Z05B	28in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
PAL/N	Toshiba 28Z06B	28in	3	●	●	●		●	●	–	N/A		
PAL/N	Toshiba 32Z06B	32in	3	●	●	●		●	●	–	N/A		



WIDESCREEN SURROUND SOUND TELEVISIONS

PAL/	MODEL NTSC3.58	SCREEN SIZE	SCART	S-VIDEO	FRONT AV IN	AUDIO OUT	EXT SPEAK TERM	RGB	100HZ	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
	Grundig 702700FA	28in	2	●		●				–	N/A	£580	
	Grundig 110/1F	42in	3	●		●				–	N/A		
PAL/N	Grundig Arganto	32in	2	●	●	●	●	●		Great pic but average connectivity	Mar 00	£1,200	8
PAL/N	Hitachi C24W511TN	24in	2	●	●	●	●	●		Taste of luxury for cramped I-rooms. BB	Dec 99	£460	9
PAL/N	Hitachi C28W35TN	28in	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£900	
PAL/N	Hitachi C28W40DTN	28in	2	●	●	●	●	●		–(IDTV)	N/A	£850	
PAL/N	Hitachi C28WD2TNP	28in	2	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£600	
PAL/N	Hitachi C32W35TN	32in	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	Progressive scan	N/A	£1,200	
PAL/N	Hitachi C32W40DTN	32in	2	●	●	●	●	●		Integrated digital tuner	N/A	£1,000	
PAL/N	Hitachi C32WD2TNPW	32in	2	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£1,000	
PAL/N	Hitachi C32WF523N	32in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£900	
PAL/N	Hitachi C32WF810N	32in	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£1,400	
Multi	Hitachi C36WF810N	36in	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	Great pics, not-so-great (DD) sound. BB	Jun 00	£1,900	9
Multi	JVC AV-28WFR1EKS	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Feature-laden, attractive set. BB	Jun 00	£900	9
Multi	JVC AV-32WFR1EKS	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£1,100	
PAL/N	JVC AV-28WR4EK	28in	2	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£600	
PAL/N	JVC AV-32WFD1EK	32in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
PAL/N	JVC AV-32WFP1	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Feature-laden, great sound, dodgy pics	Dec 99	£1,500	7
PAL/N	JVC AV-32WR4	32in	2	●	●	●				–	N/A	£900	
PAL/N	Loewe Planus 4681Z	32in	2	●	●	●		●	●	Picture quality/design ooze class. BB	Oct 98	£1,650	9
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-32DK2	32in	2	●	●	●	●			Practically perfect in every way. BB	Sept 00	£950	9
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-W28R3DP	28in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£850	
Multi	Philips 28DW6734	28in	2	●	●	●	●	●		– (IDTV)	N/A		
Multi	Philips 28PW6615	28in	3	●		●	●	●		–	N/A		
Multi	Philips 28PW9615/05	28in	4	●	●	●	●	●	●	Wireless(ish) DD set. Strong pic/sound	Dec 98	£1,900	9
Multi	Philips 28PW9616	28in		●		●	●	●	●	–	N/A		
Multi	Philips 32DW6834	32in	2	●	●	●	●	●		– (IDTV)	N/A		
PAL	Philips 28PW6515	28in		●		●		●		–	N/A		
Multi	Philips 28PW6615	28in	3	●		●	●	●		Good value, nice looking. BB	Oct 00	£700	9
Multi	Philips 28PW9525	28in		●		●		●	●	–	N/A		
Multi	Philips 28PW9535	28in		●		●		●	●	–	N/A		
Multi	Philips 28PW9545	28in		●		●		●	●	–	N/A		
Multi	Philips 32PW6515	32in		●		●		●		–	N/A	£1,600	
Multi	Philips 32PW6615	32in	3	●		●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£1,600	
Multi	Philips 32PW9535	32in		●		●		●	●	–	N/A	£1,600	
Multi	Philips 32PW9545	32in		●		●		●	●	–	N/A	£1,600	
Multi	Philips 32PW9615	32in		●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£1,600	
Multi	Philips 32PW9616	32in	4	●	●	●	●	●	●	Good quality Dolby Digital home cinema TV. BB	Oct 00	£1,500	9
Multi	Philips 36PW9525/05	36in	3	●		●	●	●		Near-perfect pictures & decent sound. BB	Jun 00	£2,000	9
PAL/N	Samsung WI24W6VD	24in	2		●			●		–	N/A	£450	
PAL/N	Samsung WI28W6VD	28in	2		●			●		–	N/A	£600	
PAL/N	Samsung WS32W6HA	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£1,100	
PAL/N	Samsung WI28W6VDT	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	– (IDTV)	N/A	£1,400	
PAL/N	Samsung WS32W6	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Breathtaking in every dept. BB	Nov 99	£1,100	9
	Sanyo 28WP4	24in	2		●					–	N/A	£650	
	Sanyo 32WP4	32in	2		●					–	N/A	£850	
PAL/N	Sanyo 32WP3	32in	2	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£950	
PAL/N	Sharp 66FW-54H	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£530	
PAL/N	Sharp 76FW-54H	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£830	
PAL/N	Sharp 66GF-64H	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●		–	N/A	£	
PAL/N	Sharp 76GF-64H	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£	
Multi	Sony KV-28DS60	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£1,500	
Multi	Sony KV-32DS20	32in	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
Multi	Sony KV-28FS20U	28in	2	●	●	●	●	●		WEGA looks,. good picture, excellent sound	Oct 00	£900	8
Multi	Sony KV-32DS60	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Superb set with built-in dig tuner. BB	Sep 99	£2,000	9
Multi	Sony KV-36FS70	36in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Stunning set with DRC-MF processing	May 00	£2,500	9
Multi	Thomson 24WK23/24	24in	1							–	N/A	£400	
Multi	Thomson 28VK26UW	28in	2	●	●	●				–	N/A	£600	
Multi	Thomson 28WF64US	28in	3						●	–	N/A	£900	
Multi	Thomson 32VK26UW	32in	2	●	●	●				–	N/A		
Multi	Thomson 32VK66UW	32in	3	●	●	●				–	N/A		
Multi	Thomson 32WF64US	32in	3						●	–	N/A	£1,200	
Multi	Toshiba 28W8DB	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£850	
Multi	Toshiba 32W8DB	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hugely impressive visuals. BB	Jul 99	£1,200	9
PAL/N	Toshiba 32WD98B	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Home cinema heaven. BB DD TV	Dec 99	£1,300	10
PAL/N	Toshiba 32WT98B	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Accomplished, easy to use IDTV	Aug 00	£1,500	8
PAL/N	Toshiba 32ZD98B	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Superb images, DD sound. BB	Jan 00	£1,700	9
PAL/N	Toshiba 28Z07B	28in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Component video input	N/A		
PAL/N	Toshiba 32Z07B	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●		Component video input	N/A		
PAL/N	Toshiba 32ZD08B	32in	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Excellent picture, DD sound, component input. BB	Nov 00	£1,500	9





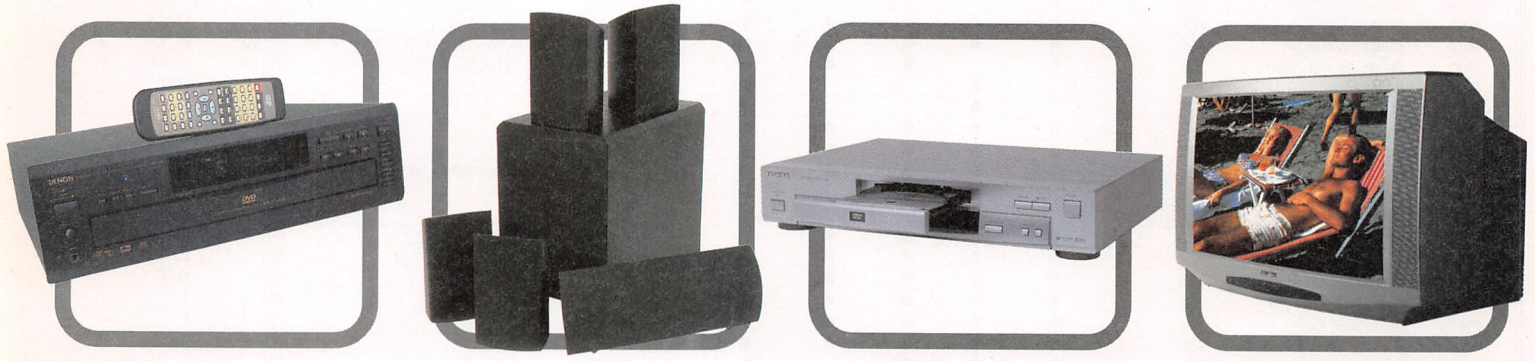
TELEVISIONS

KEY TO REAR-PROJECTION TELEVISIONS

System: TV/video colour system.
Screen Size: Quoted screen size.
Aspect Ratio: 4:3 = standard, 16:9 = widescreen.
Scart/S-Video: These are listed to help with hook-up.
Front AV Inputs: Usually phono audio and video, and sometimes S-video inputs, typically for easy camcorder or video game connection.
Audio Outputs: For connecting the TV to a hi-fi or **AV system.** External Speaker Terminals: Provision for outboard loudspeakers.
RGB: Provision of direct red, green and blue drives to video amplifiers.**100hz scanning:** Picture is refreshed at twice the normal rate to reduce flicker.
Test Date: Ratings are based on full tests of equipment.

REAR-PROJECTION TELEVISIONS

SYSTEM	MODEL	SCREEN SIZE	ASPECT RATIO	SCART	S-VIDEO	FRONT AV IN	AUDIO OUT	EXT SPEAK TERMS	RGB	100HZ	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
PAL/N	Hitachi C43WP910TN	43in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Awe-inspiring sound & picture. BB	Apr 00	£2,800	9
PAL/N	Hitachi C55WP910TN	55in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	N/A	£3,600	
PAL/N	Panasonic TX-47PT1	47in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Stunning picture quality. BB	Apr 99	£3,400	9
PAL/N	Philips 55PP9501	55in	16:9		●	●	●		●	●	–			
PAL	Philips 46PP9501	46in	16:9		●	●	●		●	●	–			
Multi	Pioneer SD-T50W1	50in	16:9	2	●		●	●	●		–	N/A	£3,000	
Multi	Samsung SP-43J6HD	43in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Great pic & impressive DPL sound. BB	Sept 00	£2,300	9
PAL	Sanyo XR70	70in	4:3	0	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£1,200	
	Sony KL50W2	50in	16:9	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
Multi	Sony KP-41S4U	41in	4:3	3	●	●	●	●	●		High-quality set. BB	Sep 98	£1,800	9
Multi	Sony KP-48PS1	48in	4:3	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
Multi	Sony KP-53PS1	53in	4:3	3	●	●	●		●		–	N/A		
Multi	Sony KP-61PS1	61in	4:3	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	The best super-screen TV you can buy. BB	Sept 00	£3,800	9
Multi	Thomson 46RH40U	46in	4:3	3	●	●	●				–	N/A		
Multi	Thomson 52RH40U	52in	4:3	3	●	●	●				–	N/A		
Multi	Toshiba 40PW03B	40in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●		Very attractive picture and price. BB	July 00	£1,800	9
Multi	Toshiba 40WH08B	40in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	Vibrant Dolby Dig set. Ideal for DVD. BB	Nov 00	£2,000	9
Multi	Toshiba 40PJ03B	43in	4:3	3	●	●	●	●	●		Very attractive picture and price. BB	July 00	£1,800	9
Multi	Toshiba 43PJ93B	43in	4:3	3	●	●	●	●	●		– (Nicam stereo)	N/A		
Multi	Toshiba 46WH08B	46in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	– (Component video input, Dolby Dig)	N/A		
Multi	Toshiba 50PJ98B	50in	4:3	3	●	●	●	●	●		Breathtaking visuals. BB	Feb 00	£2,500	9
Multi	Toshiba 56PW8DB	56in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●		Epic AV performer. BB	May 99	£4,000	9
Multi	Toshiba 56WH08B	56in	16:9	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	– (Component video input, Dolby Dig)	N/A		



KEY TO FRONT-PROJECTION SYSTEMS

Type: TV/Video colour system.
Aspect Ratio: 4:3 = standard, 16:9 = widescreen.
Total Inputs/Audio Outputs: These are listed to help with hook-up.
External Speaker Terminals: Provision for out-board loudspeakers.
User Convergence Adjustments (UCA): Provision of user-controls for tube convergence.
Variable Focus: User focus adjustment.
Keystone Adjustment: Provision for vertical picture shift.
Rear Projection: Reverse left/right facility for projection behind screen.
Rating: Ratings are based on full tests of equipment.

FRONT-PROJECTION SYSTEMS

TYPE	MODEL	ASPECT RATIO	BNC/SCART/ S-VIDEO	AUDIO OUTPUTS	VAR FOCUS	KEYSTONE ADJUST	REAR OPTION	NTSC PLAYBACK	WGHT (KG)	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
LCD	Ask A9+	4:3/16:9	0/0/1	●	●	●	●	●	4.9	Bit pricey & loud fan but impressive pictures	Jul 00	£5,000	8
CRT	Barco 508	3.58/4:43	3/0/1	●	●	●			32	Awesome picture. BB	Dec 98	£4,112	9
CRT	Philips ProScreen 4600	4:3	0/0/1	●	●	●			8	Easy to use and carry. BB	Mar 98	£5,860	9
LCD	Philips SV10	4:3	0/0/1		●			●	5.5	Cheap with great looks but not a serious h c option	Jul 00	£2,500	6
LCD	Proxima DP 5950	4:3/16:9	0/0/1	●	●		●	●	6.5	Big-hearted home cinema projector in a big box. BB	Jul 00	£3,500	9
CRT	RCF LS4001WS	1.85:1/16:9	3/0/1		●	●			35	Widescreen upgrade. BB	May 96	£4,995	9
LCD	Sanyo PLC-SU07	4:3	0/0/1	●	●		●	●	3.9		N/A	£2,495	
LCD	Sanyo PLC-SU20	4:3	0/0/1	●	●	●	●	●	3.9		N/A	£2,995	
LCD	Sanyo PLC-XP20	4:3	0/0/1	●	●	●	●	●	6.9		N/A	£5,995	
CRT	Seleco SVP350	4:3	1/1/1	●	●			●	35	Tiny unit, great performance	Feb 00	£3,700	8
LCD	Sharp XV-ZW60E	4:3/16:9	5/0/2	●				●	14.8	Great value/playback. BB	Jan 00	£3,500	9
LCD	Sharp XV-C20E	4:3			●		●	●	4.5	–	N/A	£1,500	
LCD	Sharp XV-Z1E	4:3		●	●		●	●	7.5	–	N/A	£3,500	
LCD	Sony VPL-VW10HT	16:9/4:3	0/0/1		●	●	●	●	8	Magnificent LCD projector. A landmark product. BB	Jun 00	£5,900	10
LCD	Toshiba TLPMT1	16:9/4:3	0/0/1	●	●	●	●	●		Superb perofrmance and intuitive set-up. BB	Nov 00	£3,500	9

TVCR COMBIS

MODEL	SCREEN SIZE	TELETEXT	TWIN TUNER	VIDEO PLUS	PDC	SCARTS	FRONT AV	NTSC PLAYBACK	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Aiwa VXD-143	14in		●	●		1	●	●	–	N/A	£230	
Aiwa VXD-149	14in	●		●	●	1	●	●	– (Fastext)	N/A	£280	
Aiwa VXD-1420	14in	●	●	●	●	1	●	●	– (Fastext)	N/A	£280	
Aiwa VXD-2120	21in	●	●	●	●	1	●	●	– (Fastext)	N/A	£330	
Bush BTV14	14in					1			–	N/A		
Bush BTV17	14in					1			–	N/A		
Daewoo DVT-1482P	14in			●		1	●	●	Excellent value, good picture	Mar 98	£290	8
Daewoo DVT-2082P	20in			●		1	●	●	Strong on picture, indifferent sound	April 98	£380	8
Daewoo DVT-5582P	21in	●	●	●		1	●	●	–	N/A	£350	
Ferguson C3615UT	14in	●		●	●	1	●	●	–	N/A		
Goodmans TVC201T	20in	●	●	●	●	1	●	●	–	N/A	£250	
Grundig TVR3715	14in	●							–	N/A	£230	
Grundig TVR3730	14in	●	●	●	●	1		●	–	N/A		
Grundig TVR5150	20in	●	●	●	●	1		●	–	N/A		
Grundig TVR725	14in	●	●	●	●		●		–	N/A	£300	
Hitachi C1420VT	14in	●		●	●	1		●	Good picture, few weaknesses	Mar 98	£260	8
LG KE14P2B	14in						●	●	–	N/A	£220	
LG KE14P2BX	14in	●					●	●	–	N/A	£240	
LG KE14U73X	14in	●				1	●	●	–	N/A	£300	
LG KE21P10T	21in	●	●	●	●		●	●	– (Flatscreen set)	N/A	£450	
Philips 14PV284	14in	●	●	●	●	1	●		Excellent picture and features. BB	Dec 98	£400	9
Philips 14PV320	14in	●	●	●	●	2	●	●	–	N/A	£330	
Philips 14PV340	14in	●		●	●	1	●	●	– (Alarm clock radio)	N/A	£330	
Philips 20PV220	20in	●	●	●	●	1	●		–	N/A	£380	
Philips 21PV320	21in	●	●	●	●	2	●	●	–	N/A	£430	
Philips 25PV720	25in	●	●	●	●	2	●	●	– (Dolby Pro-Logic)	N/A	£600	
Samsung TI20C5DF	20in	●	●	●		1	●	●	–	N/A	£350	
Samsung TI14B3	14in					1	●	●	–	N/A	£220	
Samsung TI14B3DF	14in	●	●	●		1	●	●	–	N/A	£260	
Samsung TI14B3F	14in	●		●		1	●	●	–	N/A	£240	
Samsung TI21B5DF	21in	●	●	●		1	●	●	–	N/A	£400	
Samsung TI21B5N	21in	●	●	●		1	●	●	– (Nicam stereo)	N/A	£430	
Sharp 37VT-26H	14in	●		●	●	1	●		–	N/A	£250	
Sony KV-14V5	14in	●		●	●	1	●	●	Superb picture, good features. BB	Mar 98	£380	9
Sony KV-14V6	14in	●	●	●	●	1	●	●	Strong on sound, indifferent picture. BB	Dec 98	£400	9
Sony KV-21V6	21in	●	●	●	●	1	●	●	–	N/A	£450	
Tatung TVC 562	14in					1			–	N/A		
Thomson 14CB25UT	14in	●	●	●	●	1	●	●	–	N/A		
Thomson 20CB25UT	20in	●	●	●	●	1	●	●	–	N/A		

SURROUND SOUND PROCESSORS

MODEL	DOLBY DIGITAL	DTS	PRO-LOGIC	THX	VIDEO IN	S-VIDEO COMPAT	AUDIO IN	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Cyrus AV Master			●		N/A		4	Stylish upgrade. BB	Aug 96	£650	9
Lexicon DC-2	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	Consummate home cinema performer. BB	Jul 99	£3,800	9
Lexicon MC-1	●	●	●	●	●	●	8	First-rate processor with 8-channel audio inputs and THX EX support	Aug 00	£5,500	9
Lexicon OC-2	●	●	●	●	●	●	5	–	N/A	£3,800	
Marantz DP870U	●		●				6	Dolby Digital decoder. BB	Apr 97	£600	9
Onkyo ED-901	●		●	●	2	●	5	Dolby Digital decoding processor. BB	Mar 97	£700	9
Parasound AVC-1800	●	●	●	●	●	●	6	–	N/A	£1,200	
Parasound AVC-2500	●	●	●	●	●	●	6	–	N/A	£3,000	
Sony SDP-EP90ES	●		●		N/A		5	Excellent sound quality and range of inputs	Jul 98	£600	8
Sony SDP-EP9ES	●		●				5	Offers MPEG 5.1. BB	Oct 97	£600	9
Technics SH-AC-300	●		●		N/A		3	Great price and sound; no Dolby Digital RF input	Jul 98	£300	8
Yamaha DSP-E800	●	●	●		4	●	3	–	N/A	£300	

SURROUND SOUND AMPLIFIERS

MODEL	DOLBY DIGITAL	DTS	DPL	THX	FRONT AMP (W)	CENTRE AMP (W)	REAR AMP (W)	VIDEO IN	S-VIDEO COMPAT	AUDIO IN	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Arcam Alpha AV50			●		2x50	55	2x50	2		7	Loads of video inputs, great sound. BB	Sep 97	£700	9
Denon AVC-A10SE	●	●	●	●	2x125	125	2x125	6	●	11	First-ever THX Surround EX amp. Wow! BB	Jul 00	£1,300	9
Denon AVC-A1D	●	●	●	●	2x140	140	2x140	6	●	11	– (Denon's flagship amp)	N/A	£2,000	
Futronix HTS-650			●		2x25	25	2x12			4	Great sound at a great price. BB	Aug 98	£150	9
Harman Kardon AVI100			●		2x30	30	2x20	2		5	Good performer for an excellent price	May 98	£200	8
Pioneer VSA-E03	●		●		2x60	60	2x60	4	●	4	–	N/A	£300	
Pioneer VSA-E07	●	●	●	●	2x130	130	2x130	5	●	10	Superior performance, a dream to use. BB	Mar 00	£1,300	9
Rotel RB-956X	N/A				2x30	30	2x30	N/A		N/A	Price includes RSP-960X preamp/decoder	Jan 97	£725	8
Rotel RB 985			●	●	2x100	100	2x100	N/A		N/A	Best Buy THX rated power amp	Jan 97	£725	9
Sony STR-DB930	●	●	●		5x100	100	2x100	3		10	Superb upgrade from DB925. Definite BB	Dec 99	£600	9
Sony TA-VA777ES	●	●	●		2x120	120	2x120	5	●	6	–	N/A	£1,500	
Sunfire Cinema Grand			●		2x100	100	2x40			10	Powerful, but suffers by comparison	Mar 98	£2,280	7
Yamaha DSP-A2	●	●	●		2x100	100	2x100	5	●	3	–	N/A	£1,000	
Yamaha DSP-A5	●	●	●		2x70	70	2x70	5	●	3	Good budget option with some limitations	Nov 00	£350	7
Yamaha DSP-AX1	●	●	●		2x110	110	2x110	8	●	5	–	N/A	£2,000	

SURROUND SOUND RECEIVERS

MODEL	SURROUND SYSTEM	FRONT AMP (W)	CENTRE AMP (W)	REAR AMP (W)	VIDEO IN	S-VIDEO COMPAT	AUDIO IN	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Denon AVC-A10SE	DD/DTS	2x125	125	2x125	6	●	11	First home DD EX receiver. Wow! BB	Jul 00	£1,300	9
Denon AVR-3300	DD/DTS	2x105	105	2x105	2	●	9	Classy performer & good value	Jan 00	£800	8
Denon AVR-1601	DD/DTS	2x60	60	2x60	3		8	- (6-channel external input)	N/A	£300	
Denon AVR-1801	DD/DTS	2x70	70	2x70	8	●	17	- (6-channel external input)	N/A	£400	
Denon AVR-2801	DD/DTS	2x90	90	2x90	5	●	19	- (6-channel external input, 94kHz/24-bit audio	N/A	£550	
Harman Kardon AVR200	DD	2x40	40	2x40	4	●	8		N/A	£400	
Harman Kardon AVR300	DD/DTS	2x50	50	2x50	4	●	8		N/A	£500	
Harman Kardon AVR500	DD/DTS	2x70	70	2x70	4	●	8		N/A	£600	
Harman Kardon AVR7000	DD/DTS	2x100	100	2x100	5	●	8		N/A	£1,000	
JVC RX-416VBK	Pro-Logic	2x50	50	2x13	2		5	Budget Pro-Logic receiver. BB	Apr 96	£270	9
JVC RX-5000RBK	Pro-Logic	2x100	100	2x100	2		3	–	N/A	£250	
JVC RX-6000RBK	DD/DTS	2x100	100	2x100	2	●	4	–	N/A	£250	
JVC RX-6001RGD	DD/DTS	2x100	100	2x100	2	●	4	–	N/A	£250	
JVC RX-7000RBK	DD/DTS	2x100	100	2x100	2	●	4	–	N/A	£350	
Kenwood KR-V5570	Pro-Logic	2x50	50	2x20	2		5	Great value Pro-Logic receiver. BB	Feb 96	£299	9
Kenwood KR-V7070	Pro-Logic	2x100	100	2x28	2		7	Great budget receiver. BB	Sep 95	£400	10
Kenwood KR-7080	Pro-Logic	2x100	100	2x28	2		4	Budget receiver with RDS tuner. BB	Jul 96	£380	9
Kenwood KR-V8090	Pro-Logic	2x100	100	2x100	3		4	Great price for what you get	Nov 98	£300	8
Kenwood KR-V888D	DD/DPL	2x120	120	2x60	2		6	Powerful, but disappointing lack of S-video	Mar 98	£1,000	8
Kenwood KRF-V7010	Pro-Logic	2x110	110	2x55	3	●	4	Top marks for price and sound	Sep 97	£400	8
Onkyo TX-DS838	DD/DPL	2x90	90	2x50	2	●	9	Superb performance, reasonably priced	May 97	£1,300	8
Onkyo TX-DS989	DD/THX EX	2x130	130	2x130	19	●	19	THX EX, 7-speaker output. Cutting edge kit. BB	Oct 00	£2,500	9
Onkyo TX-SV444	Pro-Logic	2x60	60	2x20	1		3	Good value, few weaknesses. BB	May 98	£330	9
Onkyo TX-SV828	DPL/THX	2x90	90	2x50	4	●	4	THX powerhouse. BB	Mar 97	£1,300	9
Onkyo TX-SV434	Pro-Logic	2x55	55	2x20	1		4	Competitively priced, fair performer	Apr 97	£400	7
Pioneer VSX-409RDS	Pro-Logic	2x80	80	2x80			6	–	N/A	£200	
Pioneer VSX-609RDS	DD/DTS	2x80	80	2x80	3		4	–	N/A	£250	
Pioneer VSX-709RDS	DD/DTS	2x80	80	2x80	4	●	4	– (Learning remote)	N/A	£300	
Pioneer VSX-908RDS	DD/DTS/THX	2x110	110	2x110	5	●	9	Gutsy amp – perfect for home cinema	Jan 00	£1,000	8
Philips FR740	Pro-Logic	2x60	60	2x60	5			–	N/A		
Philips FR965	DD	2x60	60	2x60	5			–	N/A		
Sherwood R-925RDS	DD/DPL	2x100	100	2x100	5		11	Stunning Dolby Digital performance. BB	April 98	£400	9
Sherwood R-945RDS	DD/DTS	2x100	100	2x100	6	●	8	Cracking receiver with DTS/AC-3. BB	Jul 98	£600	10
Sherwood R-125RDS	Pro-Logic	2x35	35	2x35	1		3	Incredibly good value. BB	Jul 97	£150	9
Sherwood RV-4080R	Pro-Logic	2x30	30	2x30	1		6	Amazing value. BB	Apr 99	£100	9
Sony STR-DE245	Pro-Logic	2x50	50	2x50	0		4	–	N/A		
Sony STR-DE445	DD/DTS	2x80	80	2x80	3		4	–	N/A		
Sony STR-DE545	DD/DTS	2x100	100	2x100	4	●	4	–	N/A		
Sony STR-DE555	DD/DTS	2x120	120	2x120	5	●	5	–	N/A		
Sony STR-DB940	DD/DTS	2x110	110	2x110	5	●	5	Well-featured, decent home cinema performer	Nov 00	£400	8
Yamaha DSP-AX1	DD/DTS	6x110 + 2x35			5	●	11	Masterful 6.1-channel performer. BB	July 00	£2,000	10
Yamaha RX-V396RDS	DD	2x60	60	2x60	3		3	–	N/A	£250	
Yamaha RX-V496RDS	DD/DTS	2x65	65	2x65	4	●	3	–	N/A	£400	
Yamaha RX-V596RDS	DD/DTS	2x70	70	2x70	5	●	3	–	N/A	£40 0	

KEY TO AMPS, RECEIVERS, PROCESSORS AND SYSTEMS

System: Various types are available, including integrated amplifiers, processors (which amplify the effects channels only), receivers (incorporating an amplifier and a tuner) and mini and midi systems, complete with Dolby Surround or Dolby Pro-Logic (DPL) amplifier, tape deck(s), tuner and sometimes a CD player.
Surround System: Dolby Surround and Pro-Logic both offer a rear surround channel. Additionally, Pro-Logic has a centre channel for speech. Dolby Digital (AC-3) and DTS offer 5.1 discrete channels. THX is a stringent set of sonic home cinema standards.
Front/Centre/Rear Amplification: The RMS (Root Mean Square) or average power output per channel.
Video Inputs: Total number of composite inputs for video sources, including VCR, satellite and laser disc or DVD.
S-video Compatible: Dedicated S-video inputs for high-band video processing.
Audio Inputs: Total number.
Test Date: If we've reviewed an AV amplifier you're interested in, you can order a copy of the test from our Test Reprints service.
Rating: Ratings are based on full tests of equipment.

SURROUND MINI AND MIDI SYSTEMS

SYSTEM	MODEL	SURROUND SYSTEM	FRONT AMP (W)	CENTRE AMP (W)	REAR AMP (W)	VIDEO IN	AUDIO IN	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Midi	Aiwa Z-VR88	Pro-Logic	2x100	38	2x38		2	Good power handling and price	Dec 98	£400	8
Mini	Akai TX-710	Pro-Logic	2x50	26	2x26		2	Budget Pro-Logic mini system. BB	Feb 97	£400	9
Mini	Akai TX-543DPL	Pro-Logic	2x30	30	2x30			– (Three-CD tray, RDS tuner)	N/A		
Mini	JVC MX 5850	Pro-Logic	2x100	30	2x15			–	N/A		
Mini	JVC CA-MXJ75R	Pro-Logic	2x100	25	2x25		1	Exceptional system. BB	May 99	£300	9
Mini	Philips FW672P	Pro-Logic	2x65	65	2x35		1	Home One-Box Cinema System of the Year. BB	Dec 96	£600	9
Mini	Philips FW790P	Pro-Logic	2x65	65	2x35	0	2	Meaty front soundstage and good price. BB	May 98	£500	9
Mini	Samsung Max-632P	Pro-Logic	2x50	20	2x10	0	5	Good value	Mar 98	£380	8
Mini	Sharp CD-PC651H	Pro-Logic	2x30	20	2x20	1	1	–	N/A	£200	
Mini	Sharp CD-DP2500H	Pro-Logic	2x60	30	2x30	2	2	–	N/A	£230	
Mini	Sony MHC-BX6AV	Pro-Logic	2x50	35	2x35	0	0	–	N/A		
Mini	Sony XBASS-LX9AV	Pro-Logic	2x120	40	2x40	0	0	–	N/A		

KEY TO SPEAKERS

Most conventional hi-fi speakers can be used as home cinema speakers. However, if you plan to use any speaker(s) within a few feet of the TV screen, you must choose a magnetically shielded model. Pro-Logic Centre Speakers are designed to handle dialogue in a Pro-Logic system. They should be sited on, or beneath, the TV. Subwoofers are low-frequency speakers designed to handle bass signals. They're sometimes used in conjunction with tiny satellite speakers, which handle the mid and high frequencies.

Magnetically Shielded:
Fitted with a second magnet, of opposite polarity from that fitted to conventional hi-fi loud-speaker, to prevent colour-staining of the picture when placed close to the TV.

Impedance:
Measurement of the load which the speaker presents to the amplifier.

Sensitivity:
The efficiency of a speaker, measured in terms of the decibel (dB) rating at 1m from the speaker with 1W of amplification.

HOME CINEMA SPEAKER PACKAGES

MODEL	SYSTEM	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
AE 100 series	2 x surrounds + 1 centre + 1 x subwoofer	What home cinema was invented for. BB	Apr 99	£850	9
B&W 600 Series 2	603 S2 + LCR6 S2 + DS6	Powerful, controlled Pro-Logic system	Dec 99	£1,300	8
Celestion C series	2 x C2 + 2 x C5r + C4c Centre + C6s	Fabulous performance. Definite BB	Jan 00	£1,900	10
Def Tech Procinema 80	4 x Procinema 80 + 1 x Prcnma 100 + ProSub 80	Commendable budget home cinema system	Jun 00	£995	8
Energy Take5 system	3 x Take2 + 1 x Take1 + 1 x e:XL-S8 sub	Excellent micro system. BB	Feb 00	£650	9
Mirage Omnipolar system	2 x OM-6 + 2 x OM-C2 + 2 x OM-R2 + BPS-400	Best Buy. Well worth the money	Apr 99	£5,000	9
Jamo speaker package	2 x Art + 2 x Artina + Art Centre +SW-505E	Solid and well matched. Best Buy	Sep 98	£890	9
JBL CM 52 system	4 x CM52 + Sub 10 + CM Centre	Improved performance on CM42 system	Sep 98	£600	8
Kef Q Series	2 x Q35 + 2xQ15 + 1 x Q95C + 1x Q30B	Excellent fronts and sub	Mar 98	£1,100	8
Mirage AVS-500	AVS-200 x 4 + AVS-100 + PS-8CE	Best Buy. Fresh and clear sound	Sep 98	£800	9
Pioneer S-V39	4 sats + 1 centre + passive sub	–	N/A	£160	
Pioneer S-V59	4 sats + 1 centre + 110W active sub	–	N/A	£280	
Pioneer S-V59T	2 floorstanders + 1 centre + 2 rear sats	–	N/A	£300	
Polk Audio RM65/140 system	4 x RM2300 + 1 x RM2600 + 1 x PSW140	Great system, superb sub. BB	Sep 99	£1,350	9
	2 x Cube rear				
REL/Genelec 1	REL Storm III + 5 x Genelec HT205	–	N/A	£2,550	
REL/Genelec 2	2 x REL Q201E + 5 x Genelec HT206	–	N/A	£4,900	
REL/Indigo	REL Strata III + Indigo 1, 2 & 3	–	N/A	£1,750	
Ruark Vita 100	4 sats + 1 centre + active sub	High performance & style in teeny cabinets. BB	Jun 00	£1,500	9
Rogers Speaker System	2xGS6 + 1xCC1 + xGS5 + 1xASB60	Good mid-range home cinema package.	Jun 98	£1,955	8
Schneider HC1 (through ASDA)	2 x front, 1x centre, 2 x satellite (no sub)	Well-built, reasonable sound, incredible value	Aug 00	£130	7
Sony DPL-VE150MK2		– (Dolby Pro-Logic package)	N/A		
Sony SAVE505		– (Pascal speaker package)	N/A		
Sony SAVE705		– (Pascal speaker package)	N/A		
Tannoy Definition D-500/D-750	4 x D-500 + 1 x D-750	Stunning 3D soundstage, top marks for D-750	Feb 98	£5,000	10
Yamaha NS-C300/NS100	4 x NS-100 + 1 x NS-C300	Punchy & lively but needs a sub for full effect	Jun 00	£600	7
Yamaha NS-P60	Three-piece centre and rear	–	N/A	£100	
Yamaha NS-P210	Five-speaker system with active sub	–	N/A	£180	
Yamaha NS-P300	Five-speaker system with active sub	–	N/A	£230	

KEY TO DVD PLAYERS

System: Almost all Region 2 players are NTSC-compatible as well as PAL, because Japan is included in R2 and uses NTSC. This does not denote Region 1 compatibility, although American discs coded Region 0 will play on these players.

RGB (Red/Green/Blue): The best way to view an AV input, usually via Scart. Check for TV compatibility.

S-video: Second-best way to view an AV input, either via Scart or dedicated S-video input. Scart: An inidication of the number of sockets.

Digital output (for bitstream audio connection to surround sound decoder): O= optical digtial output via fibre optic connection; C= coaxial digital output. Opinions vary as to which is best, so ideally look to have both.

DTS (Digital Theatre Systems): Rival 5.1-surround sound system to Dolby Digital. Connect player's digital output to a compatible receiver.

Dolby Digital 5.1 outputs: This means the Dolby Digital 5.1 channels are decoded internally & can be connected directly by phono sockets to a surround sound amplifier (a dedicated decoder/receiver is not required).

Comments: any additional notes of interest, eg CD-R/RW-compatible – will play recordable CD media; component video out – suitable for high-end TVs and projectors; quasi-PAL NTSC conversion – converts NTSC to PAL or PAL60 for TVs without full NTSC compatibility.

DVD MINI SYSTEMS

MODEL	SURROUND SYSTEM	FRONT OUTPUT	CENTRE OUTPUT	REAR	SUB	SCART	S-VIDEO	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
JVC THA10	DD/DTS	5 x 30W			30W		●	Brilliant entry point for home cinema newcomer	Sept 00	£550	8
Pioneer NS-DV55	DD/DTS	2 x 30W	1 x 30W	2 x 30W	45W		●	Most expensive but best DVD system so far. BB	Oct 00	£750	8
Panasonic SC-HT80	DD	5 x 36W			120W		●	Great value DVD/receiver/speaker package. BB	Aug 00	£600	9
Samsung MAX-945D	DPL	2 x 60W	1 x 30W	2 x 15W	–			Three-tray audio/DVD mini system with Pro-Logic	Dec 99	£500	7
Sony DAV-S300	DD/DTS	2 x 30W	1 x 30W	2 x 30W	30W		●	Brilliant entry point for home cinema newcomer	Sept 00	£550	8

DVD PLAYERS (UP TO £250)

MODEL	RGB	DIGITAL OUT	DTS	DD 5.1 OUT	SCART	S-VIDEO	COMPON VIDEO	COMMENT	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Alba DVD-103	●	O/C	●		1	●		Great price/pictures but sub-par pictures	Sept 00	£150	6
Bush DVD2000		O			1	●		Classy looks and excellent picture performance. BB	Feb 00	£200	9
Bush DVD2002		O/C		●	1	●	●	Decent budget deck lacking RGB and DTS capability	Jun 00	£180	8
Bush DVD2009	●	O/C	●		1	●		Appealing player with good sockets and AV quality	Nov 00	£170	8
Encore DV-450	●	O/C	●	●	1	●		Very capable – apart from picture quality	July 00	£200	7
Goodmans GDVD100	●	O/C	●		1	●		Decent features and built but below average picture and sound	Nov 00	£200	7
Grundig GDV210A	●	O/C	●	●	2	●		Competent budget deck with DD decoder. BB	Jun 00	£230	9
Hitachi DV-P305	●	O/C	●		1	●		Reasonable budget player with a few shortcomings	Oct 00	£230	8
JVC XV-522/3	●	O/C	●		1	●		Short of a couple of features, but great performance for price	Oct 00	£250	8
Konka KD-1800		O			0	●		Highly impressive R1 player at incredible price	Feb 00	£100	8
Lasonic DVD-2000		O/C	●	●	1	●		Fair budget player with unusual features but poor sound	Aug 00	£220	7
LG DVD-2330P		O/C	●		1	●		Solid perfomer, very easy to use. BB	Feb 00	£250	9
LG DVD-3200E	●	C	●		1	●		Better than most of the budget opposition	Sept 00	£200	8
Matsui DVD 110	●	O			1	●		Real bargain and great performer for the price. BB	Feb 00	£180	9
Mico DVD-A980		O	●	●	1	●		Better value for money than any other current player. BB	Sept 00	£180	9
Proline DVD1000	●	O			1	●		Astonishing performance for the money. BB	Dec 99	£185	9
Samsung DVD-511	●	O/C	●		1	●		Desirable entry-level player, but audio could be better	Nov 00	£220	8
Shinco DVD-180		O/C	●			●		MP3-compatible cheapie with lip-sync problems	July 00	£150	5
Thomson DTH 4000	●	O	●		1	●		– (Multibrand TV remote control, x2/x4 picture zoom)	N/A	£230	
Thomson DTH 4200	●	O/C	●		2	●		Great pictures and MP3 playback, let down by audio performance	Nov 00	£250	8
Wharfedale DVD-750	●	O	●		1	●		Easily hackable, good quality budget deck. BB	Feb 00	£180	9

DVD PLAYERS (£251-£500)

MODEL	RGB	DIGITAL OUT	DTS	DD 5.1 OUT	SCART	S-VIDEO	COMPON VIDEO	COMMENT	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Akai DV-P4000	●	O	●		1	●		– (CD-R compatible)	N/A	£280	
Akai DV-P4100	●	O	●		1	●		– (Three-disc tray, CD-R compatible)	N/A	£350	
Akai DV-P4500	●	O	●	●	1	●	●	– (CD-R compatible)	N/A	£450	
Denon DVD-1000	●	O/C	●		1	●	●	– (CD-R compatible, 96kHz/24-bit PCM audio)	N/A	£350	
Denon DVD-1500		O	●					–	N/A	£400	
Harman Kardon DVD1	●	O/C	●		2	●			N/A	£450	
Hitachi DV-P250	●	O/C	●		1	●		Superior to bargain decks for little extra cash. BB	Dec 99	£255	9
Hitachi DV-P505	●	O/C	●	●	2	●		– (2x/4x area selectable zoom)	N/A	£350	
JVC XV-505GD	●	O/C	●		2	●		–	N/A	£400	
JVC XV-M557		O/C	●	●	1	●		Good-looking deck with 3-disc tray. No RGB & a bit pricey	Jun 00	£300	8
JVC XV-D723G	●	O/C	●	●	1	●	●	Competitively-priced DVD-Audio player	Oct 00	£500	
Kenwood DVF-3530	●	O/C	●		2	●		–	N/A	£280	
LG DVD-2280P	●	O/C	●	●	2	●	●	–	N/A	£260	
LG DVD-3350E	●	O	●	●	2	●	●	–	N/A	£260	
Panasonic DVD-A160		O	●		2	●		Reasonable quality but overpriced player	Mar 00	£300	8
Panasonic DVD-RV40		O/C	●	●	2	●		Basically a budget entry-level player plus DD decoder	Sept 00	£350	8
Philips DVD710	●	C						–	N/A	£280	
Philips DVD750	●	O/C	●		2	●		Sonic prowess and a decent picture.	Feb 00	£290	8
Philips DVD955	●	O/C	●	●	2	●		Fine performer with an easy to use operating system. BB	Oct 00	£400	9
Pioneer DV-525	●	O/C	●		1	●		Horrible handset but above-average AV performance	Apr 00	£280	8
Pioneer DV-606D		O			0	●		Excellent Region 1 player, easily modifiable. (US import). BB	Dec 98	£500	9
Pioneer DV-636D	●	O/C	●	●	2	●		Superb audio playback, good picture and superior features. BB	Oct 00	£400	9
Pioneer PDV-10		O	●		0	●		Tres elegant 'transportable' deck (no LCD screen)	July 20	£450	8
Samsung DVD-A500	●	O	●		1	●		–	N/A	£500	
Samsung DVD-909	●	O/C	●	●	1	●		Excellent performance for the money	Nov 99	£380	9
Sharp DV-600H	●	O/C	●		1	●		–	N/A	£350	
Sharp DV-760H	●	O/C	●	●	1	●	●	–	N/A	£500	
Sony DVP-F11		O/C	●		0	●		Top-notch performance from portable player. BB	Jan 00	£400	9
Sony DVP-S335	●	O/C	●		2	●		Super-sleek and user-friendly but unspectacular AV performance	Sept 00	£300	8
Sony DVP-S535	●	O/C	●	●	2	●		Neat, slimline player with superior picture and plenty of features	Aug 00	£370	8
Sony DVP-S735	●	O/C	●	●	2	●	●	Slimline player with a great picture and features galore. BB	Oct 00	£500	9
Tatung TDV-2000		O			0	●		A performance that belies the price & decent feature list	Jan 00	£300	8
Thomson DTH 4500	●	O/C	●	●	2	●		– (CD-R/MP3 playback, x2/x4 picture zoom)	N/A	£300	
Toshiba SD-100E	●	O/C	●		1	●		Short on features but stunning AV quality. BB	Jun 00	£300	9
Toshiba SD-200E	●	O/C	●	●	1	●	●	Formidable player with superior AV performance. BB	Sept 00	£400	9
Yamaha DVD-S796			●		1	●	●	–	N/A	£350	

DVD PLAYERS (OVER £500)

MODEL	RGB	DIGITAL OUT	DTS	DD 5.1 OUT	SCART	S-VIDEO	COMPON VIDEO	COMMENT	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Denon DVD-2500	●	O/C	●		2	●		–	N/A		
Denon DVM-3700		O/C	●		0	●	●	Audio/videophiles dream player. BB	Apr 00	£1,000	9
Denon DVD-5000	●	O/C	●		0	●	●	–	N/A	£1,600	
Grundig GDV 100D	●	C			1			–	N/A	£530	
Harman Kardon DVD5	●	O/C	●		2	●			N/A	£550	
Hitachi DVW1E	●	O/C	●	●	1	●		Innovative CD-recording/DVD twin deck with a few flaws	Aug 00	£580	7
JVC XV-D701		O/C	●	●	2	●		–	N/A	£500	
Kenwood DVF-5010	●	O/C		●	2	●	●	–	N/A	£600	
Kenwood DVF-7030	●	O/C	●	●	2	●	●	– (5-disc changer; DVD-Audio compatible; DTS decoder)	N/A	£600	
Kenwood DVF-9030	●	O/C	●	●	2	●	●	– (5-disc changer; DVD-Audio compatible; DTS decoder)	N/A	£800	
Onkyo DV-S525	●	O/C	●		1	●		Excellent, but plain-looking, DVD player	July 00	£550	8
Panasonic CX-DV1500		O/C	●	●	0			– (In-car system with LCD monitor)	N/A	£2,500	

DVD PLAYERS (OVER £500) cont

MODEL	RGB	DIGITAL OUT	DTS	DD 5.1 OUT	SCART	S-VIDEO	COMPON VIDEO	COMMENT	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Panasonic DVD-L50		0	●		0	●		– (Portable player)	N/A	£900	
Panasonic DVD-LV75		0	●	●	0	●		Miraculous, small but near-perfect portable player & screen. BB	Aug 00	£1,200	9
Panasonic DVD-PV55		0	●	●	0	●		Portable (no screen). Beautiful piece of engineering	Sept 00	£600	8
Panasonic DVD-RV20		0	●		1	●		–	N/A	£900	
Panasonic DVD-RV40		0/C	●	●	2	●		–	N/A	£900	
Panasonic DVD-RV60	●	0/C	●	●	2	●		–	N/A	£900	
Pioneer DVL-919E		0/C	●		2	●		Stunning DVD/LD combi player. BB	Jun 98	£900	9
Pioneer DV-717	●	0/C	●		2	●		Excellent picture, sound and DTS included. BB	Feb 99	£600	9
Pioneer DV-05	●	0			0	●	●	THX-certified star player. (US import). BB	May 99	£600	9
Pioneer PDV-LC10		0/C	●	●	0	●		– (Portable with LCD screen)	N/A	£1,200	
Pioneer NS-DV1		0			2	●		Great player, shame about incorporated speaker package	Mar 00	£1,500	8
Sharp DV-L70S		0				●		–	N/A	£1,000	
Sony DVP-CX850D	●	0/C	●	●	2	●		State-of-the-art 200-disc changing player. BB	Mar 00	£600	9
Sony DVP-FX1		0	●		0	●		Beautifuuly designed portable, slightly disappointing performance	Oct 00	£1,200	8
Sony DVP-S725	●	0/C	●	●	2	●	●	Very slick piece of kit, top-notch video processing. BB	Aug 99	£550	9
Sony DVP-S735	●	0/C	●	●	2	●	●	Great pictures/looks but sub-par audio test resuts	Oct 00	£500	8
Sony DVP-S7700	●	0/C	●		2	●	●	–	N/A	£800	
Thomson 24WT25ES		0			2	●		First DVD-playing TV. Great product. BB	Sept 00	£700	9
Toshiba SD-9000		0/C	●	●	0	●	●	Classy looks & exemplary performance. BB	Jan 00	£800	9

MONO VCRs

MODEL	TIMER	INDEX SEARCH	PDC	FRONT AV IN	SCART	NTSC PLAYBACK	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Aiwa HV-GX935	31/7	●			1	●	–(2 heads)	N/A	£100	
Aiwa HV-GX955	31/7	●	●		2	●	–(2 heads)	N/A	£110	
Akai VS-J237	31/8	●	●		2	●	–	N/A		
Bush VCR807	31/8	●			1	●	–	N/A	£80	
Bush VCR808	31/8	●			2		–	N/A	£90	
Bush VCR817VP	31/8	●			1	●	–	N/A	£100	
Bush VCR818VP	365/8	●			2		–	N/A	£120	
Daewoo K281P	31/8	●			2	●	–	N/A		
Daewoo K283P	31/8	●	●		2	●	–	N/A		
Daewoo K285P	31/8	●	●		2	●	–	N/A		
Daewoo Q256P	31/8	●	●		1	●	–	N/A	£110	
Ferguson FV401LV	365/4	●	●		2	●	–	N/A	£120	
Grundig GV 9000	31/6	●	●		2		–	N/A	£110	
Grundig GV 9300	31/8	●	●		2		–	N/A	£140	
Hitachi VT-M6331	31/6	●	●		2	●	Solid machine for the money. BB	Mar 99	£170	9
Hitachi VTMX810	31/8		●		0	●	–	N/A		
Hitachi VTMX835	31/8	●	●	●	2	●	–	N/A		
JVC HR-J260EK	365/8	●	●		2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A		
JVC HR-J265EK	365/8	●	●		2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A	£150	
JVC HR-J270EK		●	●	●		●	–	N/A	£130	
JVC HR-J465EK	365/8	●	●		2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A	£180	
LG BD260I	31/7				1	●	–	N/A	£90	
LG BC298I	31/7		●		1	●	–	N/A	£110	
Mitsubishi HS-821VB	31/8	●	●		2		–	N/A	£180	
Mitsubishi HS-841VB	31/8	●	●		2		–	N/A	£190	
Mitsubishi HS-721	31/8	●	●		2		Two head version of HS-740	Feb 98	£200	8
Panasonic NV-SJ210	365/8	●	●		1	●	–	N/A		
Panasonic NV-SJ260	365/8	●	●	●	2	●	–	N/A		
Panasonic NV-SJ410	365/8	●	●	●	2	●	–	N/A		
Philips VR200	31/6	●	●		2		–	N/A	£150	
Philips VR285	31/6	●	●		2		–	N/A	£200	
Samsung SV230B	31/6	●		●	1	●	–	N/A	£120	
Samsung SV-231B	31/6	●	●	●	1	●	–	N/A	£130	
Samsung SV-232B	31/6	●		●	1	●	–	N/A	£130	
Samsung SV-233B	31/6	●	●	●	1	●	–	N/A	£140	
Samsung SV-120W	31/6	●					– (AC/DC operation)	N/A	£120	
Sanyo VHR-M299	365/6	●	●		2	●	–	N/A	£120	
Sanyo VHR-M280	365/6	●			1	●	– (only as part of TV/VCR package)	N/A		
Sharp VC-M303HM	365/8	●			1		–	N/A	£	
Sharp VC-M313HM	365/8	●		●	1		–	N/A	£	
Sharp VC-M33HM	365/8	●	●	●	2		–	N/A	£	
Sony SLV-SE200UX	31/8		●		1	●	–	N/A		
Sony SLV-SE300UX	31/8		●	●	2	●	–	N/A		
Tatung TVR 934	31/8	●			1		–	N/A		
Tatung TVR 935V	31/8	●	●		1	●	–	N/A		

NICAM VCRs

FORMAT	MODEL	TIMER	INDEX SEARCH	PDC	FRONT AV IN	INSERT EDIT	AUDIO DUB	SCART	NTSC PLAYBACK	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
VHS	Aiwa HV-FX7700	31/7	●	●				2	●	–	N/A	£150	
VHS	Aiwa HV-FX8200	31/7	●	●	●		●	2	●	–	N/A	£180	
VHS	Aiwa HV-MX100	31/6	●		●			1	●	Well-specified multistandard deck	Sept 00	£700	8
VHS	Akai VS-J737	31/8	●	●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£130	
VHS	Akai VS-J739	31/8	●	●	●			2	●	– (Sat-box control)	N/A		
VHS	Bush VCR860NVP	31/8	●				●	1		Great value, includes audio inputs/outputs. BB	May 98	£240	9

NICAM VCRs (cont)

FORMAT	MODEL	TIMER	INDEX SEARCH	PDC	FRONT AV IN	INSERT EDIT	AUDIO DUB	SCART	NTSC PLAYBACK	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
VHS	Bush VCR870NVP	31/8	●					1	●	–	N/A	£130	
VHS	Bush VCR880NVP	365/8	●					2		–	N/A	£150	
VHS	Daewoo Q857P	31/8	●	●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£150	
VHS	Ferguson FV305 HV	N/A		●	●			2		Good picture and audio. BB	Dec 98	£200	9
VHS	Ferguson FV405HV	365/8	●	●				2	●	–	N/A	£150	
VHS	Ferguson FV407HV	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	–	N/A		
VHS	Goodmans VN9500	31/8	●	●	●			2		Great performer at amazing price. BB	Sept 99	£150	9
VHS	Grundig GV-8400	31/6	●	●				2	●	–	N/A	£150	
VHS	Hitachi VT-FX850	365/8	●	●				2	●	–	N/A	£180	
VHS	Hitachi VT-FX860	N/A	●	●	●			2	●	Competent & affordable Nicam deck	Feb 00	£200	8
VHS	Hitachi VT-FX880	N/A	●	●	●			2	●	First VCR to skip past ads. BB	Aug 99	£290	9
D-VHS	JVC HM-DR10000	365/8		●	●	●		2	●	First-ever D-VHS/S-VHS deck. Superb quality. BB	Mar 00	£1,300	10
VHS	Hitachi VT-FX880		●	●	●			2	●	First VCR to skip past ads. BB	Aug 99	£290	9
VHS	Hitachi VT-FX980		●	●	●			2	●	Stunning features and very good performance. BB	Oct 00	£280	9
D-VHS	JVC HM-DR10000	365/8		●	●	●		2	●	First-ever D-VHS/S-VHS deck. Superb quality. BB	Mar 00	£1,300	10
VHS	JVC HR-DD855EK	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A	£290	
VHS	JVC HR-DD865EK	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A		
S-VHS/DV	JVC HR-DVS1	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	Revolutionary S-VHS/DV deck. Outstanding. BB	Nov 99	£1,300	9
VHS	JVC HR-J660EK	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A		
VHS	JVC HR-J665EK	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	Good value, excellent AV quality. BB	Jul 99	£230	9
VHS	JVC HR-J670EK	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	Super deck at a super price. BB	Jun 00	£200	9
VHS	JVC HR-J870EK	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	Excellent value for such a high-spec VCR. BB	Nov 00	£250	9
S-VHS	JVC HR-S6600	365/8	●	●				2	●	S-VHS for price of VHS. Excellent package. BB	Oct 99	£300	9
S-VHS ET	JVC HR-S6700	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	Impressive technology = high-quality playback. BB	July 00	£300	9
S-VHS	JVC HR-S7500	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	First affordable S-VHS deck. BB	Oct 98	£350	9
S-VHS	JVC HR-S7600EK	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A	£300	
S-VHS	JVC HR-S8600EK	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A		
S-VHS	JVC HR-S9500	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A	£500	
S-VHS ET	JVC HR-S7700	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	ET mode records S-video quality on VHS tape. Best Buy.	May 00	£330	9
S-VHS ET	JVC HR-S7722	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (ET mode)	N/A	£450	
S-VHS ET	JVC HR-S8700	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (ET mode)	N/A	£450	
S-VHS ET	JVC HR-S9700	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (ET mode)	N/A	£550	
S-VHS	JVC HR-S9600EK	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (16:9 rec & playback)	N/A		
VHS	LG BC969N1	31/7		●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£130	
VHS	LG BC999N1	31/7		●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£140	
S-VHS	LG S909N1	31/7	●	●	●		●	2	●	–	N/A	£240	
VHS	Mitsubishi HS-851VB	31/8	●	●				2		–	N/A	£280	
VHS	Mitsubishi HS-861VB	31/8	●	●		●	●	2		–	N/A	£330	
VHS	Mitsubishi HS-871VB	31/8	●	●	●	●	●	2		–	N/A	£380	
DVC	Panny NV-DV10000	31/8	●	●	●	●	●	2		High-end DV mastering deck. BB	Mar 99	£2,300	9
VHS	Panasonic NV-FJ610	365/8	●	●				2	●	Very good pictures, sound and features. BB	Nov 00	£200	9
VHS	Panasonic NV-FJ615	365/8	●	●	●		●	2	●	– (Sat control, EP mode, quasi-S-VHS/ET playback)	N/A		
VHS	Panasonic NV-FJ710	365/8	●	●	●		●	2	●	– (Sat control, EP, Tape Library, quasi-S-VHS/ET play)	N/A		
VHS	Panasonic NV-FJ760	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	Fully featured EP deck with Sat control, Tape Library. BB	Aug 00	£350	9
VHS	Panasonic NV-HD645	31/8	●	●	●		●	2	●	–	N/A	£280	
S-VHS	Panasonic NV-HD850	31/8	●	●	●	●	●	2		Excellent S-VHS deck at decent price. BB	Dec 99	£400	9
S-VHS	Panasonic NV-HS950	31/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	–	N/A		
VHS	Philips VR608	31/6	●	●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£200	
V HS	Philips VR617	31/6	●	●				2	●	Very impressive performer for the money. BB	Nov 00	£180	9
VHS	Philips VR765	31/6	●	●	●		●	2	●	- (Tape Manager, Turbo Timer)–	N/A	£240	
VHS	Philips VR860	31/6	●	●	●		●	2		Top-notch performer, unusual features. BB	Oct 99	£350	9
VHS	Philips VR900									–	N/A	£330	
S-VHS	Philips VR969	31/6	●	●	●	●	●	2		Good edit facilities, weak LP picture. BB	Mar 98	£800	9
S-VHS	Philips VR1000	365/8	●	●	●		●	2		Excellent AV performance for great price. BB	Apr 00	£320	9
D-VHS	Philips VR20D	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	Brilliant performance and superior features. BB	Oct 00	£1,100	10
VHS	Samsung SV-5000W	31/6	●	●	●			1	●	Great value worldwide standards converting VCR. BB	Nov 00	£600	9
VHS	Samsung SV-630B	31/6	●		●			2	●	–	N/A	£140	
VHS	Samsung SV-6303B	31/6	●		●			2	●	–	N/A	£150	
VHS	Samsung 633B	31/6	●	●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£160	
VHS	Samsung SV-637B	31/6	●	●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£200	
VHS	Sanyo VHR-H900	365/6	●	●	●			2	●	Respectable performer with unusual features	July 00	£200	8
VHS	Sanyo VHR790	365/6	●	●				2	●	–	N/A	£150	
VHS	Sanyo VHR900	365/6	●	●	●		●	2	●	–	N/A	£170	
VHS	Sanyo VHR780	365/6	●					1	●	–(only available as part of a TV/VCR package)	N/A		
VHS	Sanyo VHR899	365/6	●	●	●			2	●	– (Auto LP timer/Tape Library)	N/A	£230	
VHS	Sharp VC-ME80HM		●	●	●	●	●	2	●	–	N/A		
VHS	Sharp VC-MH713HM	365/8	●		●			2	●	–	N/A		
VHS	Sharp VC-MH722HM	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	Decent budget VCR for playback/timeshifting	Jun 00	£190	7
VHS	Sharp VC-MH732HM	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£200	
VHS	Sharp VC-MH742HM	365/8	●	●	●			2	●	–	N/A	£230	
VHS	Sony SLV-SE700UX	31/8	●	●				2	●	–	N/A		
VHS	Sony SLV-SE800UX	31/8	●	●	●		●	2	●	Awesome pic/sound, great features & operating system. BB	Sept 00	£250	9
VHS	Sony SLV-SE85UX	31/8	●	●	●		●	2	●	–	N/A		
VHS	Sony SLV-SF90UX	31/8	●	●	●			2	●	Impressive VCR, especially for Smartfile tape library. BB	Oct 00	£250	9
VHS	Sony SLV-SF99	31/8	●	●	●		●	2	●	A state-of-the-art triumph. BB	Jan 00	£380	9
VHS/Hi8	Sony SLV-T2000UX	31/8	●	●	●		●	2		–	N/A	£800	
VHS	Tatung TVR 754N	31/8	●	●				1	●	–	N/A		
VHS	Thomson VTH 6080	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (Naviclick, NexTView, Quasi S-VHS play, NTSC rec)	N/A	£	
VHS	Thomson VTH 7090	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (As 6080 plus set-top box control	N/A	£250	
D-VHS	Thomson DTH 8090	365/8	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (As 7090 plus D-VHS, Picture Improvement, RGB out	N/A	£1,100	
VHS	Toshiba V709	31/6	●	●				2	●	–	N/A	£200	
VHS	Toshiba V710	31/6	●	●				2	●	Affordable, though not world-beating, deck	July 00	£180	7
VHS	Toshiba V720	31/6	●	●				2	●	Capable VCR but low on features compared to rivals	Nov 00	£200	8
VHS	Toshiba V729	31/6	●	●				2	●	–	N/A	£250	
VHS	Toshiba V730	31/6	●	●	●		●	2	●	– (ONdigital box control)			
VHS	Toshiba V829	31/6	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	– (ONdigital box control, NexTView Link)	N/A	£280	
VHS	Toshiba V830	31/6	●	●	●	●	●	3	●	Set-top box control VCR marred by grainy pictures	Aug 00	£230	7
VHS	Toshiba V859B	31/6	●	●	●	●	●	2	●	Great audio/satellite control. BB	Aug 99	£330	9

KEY TO VCRs

Timer: How far ahead it can be set (in days) and the number of programmes (events) the VCR can be programmed to record. All VCRs listed have the VideoPlus recording system.
Index Search: A recorded index code is used to locate a specific point on the tape.
PDC (Programme Delivery Control): Automatically adjusts the timer if programmes are delayed. Used by BBC, Channel 4, Channel 5 and some ITV companies.
Audio System: Nicam means it is able to decode digital stereo TV sound.
Front AV Inputs: Phono and/or S-video and audio sockets mounted on the front panel for easy camcorder connection.
Insert Edit: Allows you to drop new recordings over old without picture break-up at entry and exit points.
Audio dub: Lets you record a new soundtrack while retaining the original picture.
Scart: We've listed these to help you hook up two recorders for copy/edit work, etc.
NTSC Playback: Playback of US or Japanese recordings on PAL TVs (usually requires Scart and a modern TV set).

VHS-C CAMCORDERS

MODEL	FOCAL RANGE	IMAGE STABILISER	MANUAL EXPOSURE	MANUAL FOCUS	EXTERNAL MIC	AUDIO SYSTEM	AUDIO DUB	WEIGHT (KG)	COLOUR VF/MONITOR	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
Bush VCC200	4.6-46/10x			●		mono		0.98		Cheap and cheerful	Jun 98	£300	5
JVC GR-AX280	3.8-83.6/22x		●	●		mono		0.80		Feature-packed but unexciting	Jul 98	£280	7
JVC GR-FX11	3.9-62.4/16x	●	●	●	●	mono		0.83		–	N/A	£300	
JVC GR-FXM16	3.9-62.4/16x	●	●	●	●	mono		0.96	●	–	N/A	£450	
JVC GR-FXM65	3.9-62.4/16x	●	●	●		mono		0.97	●	Rather cumbersome	Jul 99	£600	7
Panasonic NV-RX14	3.8-79.8/22x			●		mono		0.95		–	N/A	£350	
Panasonic NV-RX24	3.7-81.4/22x	●		●		mono		0.95		–	N/A	£400	
Panasonic NV-RX64	3.7-81.4/22x	●		●		mono		0.95		–	N/A	£500	
Panasonic NV-VX24	3.7-81.4/22x			●		mono		0.95		–	N/A	£550	
Panasonic NV-VX44	3.7-81.4/22x			●		mono		0.95		–	N/A	£600	
Panasonic NV-VX54	3.7-81.4/22x	●		●		mono		0.95		Pricey, with LCD screen	Jul 99	£650	7

S-VHS-C CAMCORDERS

MODEL	FOCAL RANGE	IMAGE STABILISER	MANUAL EXPOSURE	MANUAL FOCUS	EXTERNAL MIC	AUDIO SYSTEM	AUDIO DUB	WEIGHT (KG)	COLOUR VF/MONITOR	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1-10)
JVC GR-SX20	3.9-62.4/16x	●	●	●		mono		1.06		–	N/A	£450	
JVC GR-SXM26	3.9-62.4/16x	●	●	●	●	mono		.97		–	N/A	£450	
Panasonic NV-RS7	3.9-78/20x	●	●	●	●	stereo		0.96		S-VHS ET cam – a cinch to use	Jul 00	£400	7
Panasonic NV-VS4	3.9-78/20x	●	●	●	●	stereo		0.80	●	–	N/A	£500	
Panasonic NV-VS7	3.9-78/20x	●	●	●	●	stereo		0.80	●	–	N/A	£550	

8MM CAMCORDERS

MODEL	FOCAL RANGE	IMAGE STABILISER	MANUAL EXPOSURE	MANUAL FOCUS	EXTERNAL MIC	AUDIO SYSTEM	WEIGHT (KG)	COLOUR VF/MONITOR	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1/10)
Canon UC-8000	4-88/22x		●	●	●	mono	0.94		–	N/A	£350	
Canon UC-G1000	4-88/22x		●	●	●	mono	0.89		–	N/A	£350	
Canon UC-9500	4-88/22x	●	●	●	●	mono	0.94	●	–	N/A	£430	
Canon UC-V200	4-88/22x	●		●	●	mono	1.09	●	–	N/A	£350	
Canon UC-V300	4-88/22x	●		●	●	mono	1.09	●	–	N/A	£430	
Hitachi VM-E330	4-64/16x			●		mono	0.89		Cheap point-and-shooter	Feb 99	£350	8
Hitachi VM-E535	4-64/16x			●		mono	1.10		–	N/A	£500	
Samsung VP-M50	3.9-79.2/22x		●	●		mono	0.67		–	N/A	£300	
Samsung VP-M53	3.9-79.2/22x	●	●	●		mono	0.67		–	N/A	£320	
Samsung VP-L90	3.9-62.4/16x			●	●	mono	1.82	●	–	N/A	£600	
Samsung VP-L500	/22x		●	●		mono	0.76	●	–	N/A	£400	
Sanyo VM-LC100	4.0-64x16x					mono	1.00		–	N/A	£300	
Sanyo VM-LC200	4.0-64/16x	●				mono	1.00	●	–	N/A	£700	
Sharp VL-A10H	4.0-64/16x		●	●		mono	0.7	●	–	N/A	£430	
Sony CCD-TR427	4.1-73.8/18x		●	●	●	mono	0.96	●	–	N/A	£400	
Sony CCD-TRV48	4.1-73.8/18x		●	●	●	mono	0.96	●	–	N/A	£400	
Sony CCD-TRV57	4.1-73.8/18x		●	●	●	mono	0.96	●	–	N/A	£430	

HI8 CAMCORDERS

MODEL	FOCAL RANGE	IMAGE STABILISER	MANUAL EXPOSURE	MANUAL FOCUS	EXTERNAL MIC	AUDIO SYSTEM	WEIGHT (KG)	COLOUR VF/MONITOR	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1/10)
Canon UC-V40Hi	3.9-85.8/22x	●		●	●	stereo	1.09		–	N/A	£450	
Canon UC-G10Hi	3.9-85.8/22x	●		●	●	stereo	0.96	●	Feature-laden & top-notch performance. BB	Jul 00	£450	9
Hitachi VM-H520	4-48/12x			●	●	stereo	1.02				£500	
Samsung VP-M54	3.9-85.8/22x	●	●	●		mono	0.67		–		£330	
Samsung VP-L500	3.9-85.8/22x			●	●	stereo	1.92				£350	
Samsung VP-L530	3.9-85.8/22x	●		●	●	stereo	1.92	●			£400	
Samsung VP-L550	3.9-85.8/22x	●					0.55	●	–		£550	
Sharp VL-A30H	3.9-85.8	●		●	●	stereo	1.09		–	N/A	£450	
Sharp VL-A50H	3.9-85.8	●		●	●	stereo	1.09		–	N/A	£480	
Sony CCD-TRV67	3.9-85.8/22x	●		●	●	stereo	1.09	●	–	N/A	£600	
Sony CCD-TRV87	4.1-73.8/18x		●	●	●	mono	1.09	●	–	N/A	£650	
Sony CCD-TR918	3.9-85.8/22x	●		●	●	stereo	1.09	●	–	N/A	£550	
Sony CCD-TR717	3.9-85.8/22x	●		●	●	stereo	1.09	●	–	N/A	£500	
Sony CCD-TR713E	4.1-73.8/18x	●		●	●	mono	0.82				£550	
Sony CCD-TR913E	3.6-72/20x	●		●	●	stereo	0.81		Good all-round performer. BB	Apr 00	£600	9

CAMCORDERS

DIGITAL8 CAMCORDERS

MODEL	FOCAL RANGE	IMAGE STABILISER	MANUAL EXPOSURE	MANUAL FOCUS	EXTERNAL MIC	AUDIO SYSTEM	WEIGHT (KG)	COLOUR VF/MONITOR	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1/10)
Sony CCD-TRV8000	3.6-72/20x	●	●		●	stereo	0.86	●	–	N/A	£600	
Sony CCD-TRV120	3.6-72/20x	●	●		●	stereo	0.86	●	–	N/A	£700	
Sony CCD-TRV320	3.6-72/20x	●	●		●	stereo	0.86	●	–	N/A	£800	
Sony CCD-TRV620	3.6-72/20x	●	●		●	stereo	0.86	●	–	N/A	£1,000	
Sony CCD-TRV820	3.6-72/20x	●	●		●	stereo	0.86	●	–	N/A	£1,200	

KEY TO CAMCORDER TABLES

Focal Range:
Indicates the range of angles which the lens can convert at its wide and tele settings.
Image Stabiliser: Built-in anti-shake mechanism.
Exposure Control: Exposure in many camcorders is fully automatic, but some have a backlight compensator for shooting against the light, or a manual iris for deliberate under- or over-exposure.
Manual focus : Serious users often prefer a manual option for greater control.
External Mic: A socket to plug in an off-camera microphone.
Audio System: Mono or stereo.
Audio Dub: Replaces soundtrack without interfering with the picture.
Weight: Including supplied battery and cassette.
Colour Viewfinder: As distinct from the black-and-white variety.

DV CAMCORDERS

MODEL	FOCAL RANGE	IMAGE STABILISER	MANUAL EXPOSURE	MANUAL FOCUS	EXTERNAL MIC	AUDIO SYSTEM	AUDIO DUB	WEIGHT (KG)	COLOUR VF/MTR	COMMENTS	TEST DATE	GUIDE PRICE	RATING (1/10)
Canon DM-MV20	4.1-49.2/12x	●	●	●	●	stereo		0.85	●	Stunning picture/sound quality. BB	Aug 99	£900	9
Canon DM-MV30	4.1-49.2/12x	●	●	●		stereo	●	0.69	●	–	N/A	£1,000	
Canon DM-MV300	4.2-42/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.62	●	A real enthusiast's cam, with top features	Sept 00	£800	9
Canon DM-XM1	4.2-84/20x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	1.4	●	Top marks for picture/ease of use. BB	Mar 00	£1,600	9
Canon DM-XL1	5.5-88/16x	●	●	●	●	stereo		2.86	●	–	N/A	£2,700	
JVC GR-DVL100	3.6-36.0/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.79	●	–	N/A	£700	
JVC GR-DVL107	3.6-36.0/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.70	●	Top AV quality but several key omissions	Jul 00	£750	8
JVC GR-DVL300	3.6-36.0/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.79	●	–	N/A	£850	
JVC GR-DVX4	3.6-36/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.65	●	–	N/A	£1,100	
JVC GR-DVX7	3.6-36/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.65	●	–	N/A	£1,200	
JVC GR-DVL100	3.6-36/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.64	●	Great pic quality but no mic/headphone sockets	Sept 00	£700	8
JVC GR-DVL300	3.6-36/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.58	●	–	N/A	£900	
JVC GR-DVL9200	5-50/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.77	●	–	N/A	£1,100	
JVC GR-DVL9800	5-50/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.77	●	Feature-packed. Nice little cam. BB	May 00	£1,100	9
Panasonic NV-DS8	3.8-76/20x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.64	●	–	N/A	£600	
Panasonic NV-DS11	3.8-76/20x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.64	●	Impressive performance at great price. BB	Dec 99	£700	9
Panasonic NV-DS35	3.6-36/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.60	●	Perfect for creative video-makers. BB	May 00	£1,100	9
Panasonic NV-DS55	3.6-36/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.60	●	–	N/A	£1,200	
Panasonic NV-EX3	3.6-36/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.53	●	–	N/A	£1,400	
Panny NV-DX100	4.2-47.7/12x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.70	●	–	Jan 98	£1,400	9
Panny NV-DX110	4.2-47.7/12x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.70	●	–	N/A	£1,600	
Sharp VL-PD3	4.7-47/10x	●	●	●		stereo	●	0.50	●	–	N/A	£850	
Sharp VL-PD6	4.7-47/10x	●	●	●		stereo	●	0.65	●	Great cam with detachable LCD screen. BB	Jul 00	£1,100	9
Sharp VL-SD20	3.8-76/20x	●	●	●		stereo	●	0.56	●	–	N/A	£850	
Sony DCR-PC1	3.3-33/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.46	●	–	N/A	£1,100	
Sony DCR-PC3	3.6-33/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.49	●	–	N/A	£1,200	
Sony DCR-TRV6	4.7-47/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.58	●	–	N/A	£1,000	
Sony DCR-TRV11	4.7-47/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.58	●	–	N/A	£1,100	
Sony DCR-TRV20	4.8-48/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.68	●	–	N/A	£1,000	
Sony DCR-PC100	4.2-42/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.65	●	Excellent video/stills cam. BB	Jan 00	£1,600	9
Sony DCR-TRV900	4.3-51.6/12x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	0.88	●	Sports i.Link-in	Jan 99	£1,600	
Sony DCR-VX1000	5.9-59/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	1.5	●	–	N/A	£2,000	
Sony DCR-VX2000	4.3-52/12x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	1.4	●	Stunning camcorder. DV perfection.	Aug 00	£2,500	10
Sony DCR-VX9000	5.9-59/10x	●	●	●	●	stereo	●	3.4		–	N/A	£2,600	

contacts

A

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☎ 01285 654432
www.acoustic-energy.co.uk
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www.aiwa.co.uk
Akura UK: ☎ 020 8951 4323.
www.akura.com
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Audiovector: see **Glaive**

B

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C

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www.cyrus.co.uk

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916 Jan 97
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TX-DS575 May 00
TX-DS989 Oct 00

Pioneer
VSX-505RDS Dec 96
VSA-805S Feb 97
VSX908 Jan 00
VSA-E07 Mar 00

Rotel
RB 985 Jan 97
RB 956AX Jan 97

Sherwood
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R-945RDS Jul 98
AVP-9080RDS/AM-9080 Apr 99
RV-4080R Apr 99
RVD-6095RDS Apr 00

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TA-EV700 Jun 97
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Technics
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SA-EX310 Sep 97

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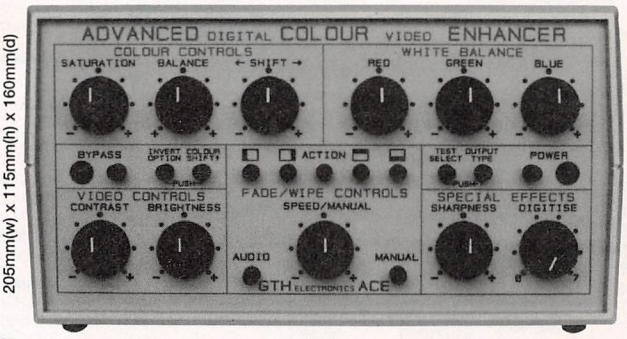

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	E-60 EHG HI-FI	£1.50
	E-120 EHG HI-FI	£1.65
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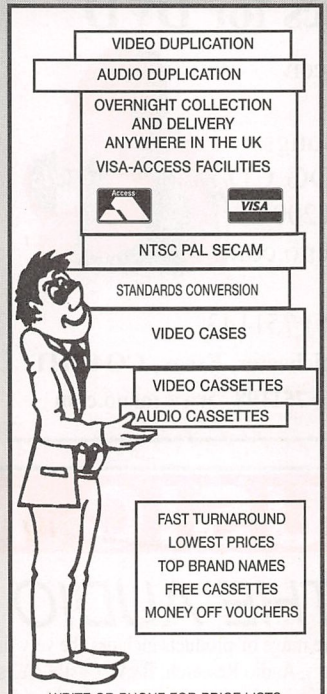

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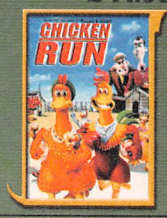		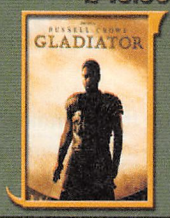		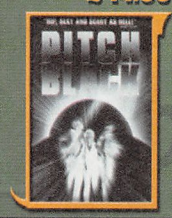
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				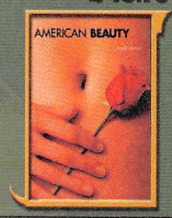
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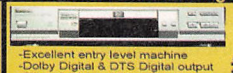
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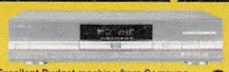
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TAKEN FOR A RIDE?

Portable DVD players. What's the point? Not much if you live in the UK, according to Kulwinder Singh Rai. And as for high-end Sony TVs with only one RGB Scart, don't get him started...

'So where exactly have you hidden that portable again?'

For the last week I have been mostly watching baby DVD players. They're easy to spot. Fashioned from tactile alloys, the latest generation of portable DVD players are inevitably too large to be pocketable, but share one other common defining characteristic – bowel-loosening price tags.

Quite why anybody is willing to buy these things in the West baffles me. With £180 now the going rate for a budget DVD player, why would you pay a whopping sum for a portable DVD player?

They may be sexy but, aside from coffee-table 'I appear to be considerably richer than yowww,' value, precisely what good are they? If you fly a lot, a portable DVD player with an LCD screen might make sense, especially if you normally go cattle-class (watching a movie via those seat-back LCDs is an insult to the film-making craft), but that's about it.

As for the notion of watching a movie on a bus or train, get real folks. How can watching a screen that's jiggling about like a lap dancer possibly be fun? Furthermore, pulling out a portable DVD player on the train might not be the most sensitive thing to do. You may as well also take the opportunity to wave a fat wad at your fellow passengers and chant 'loadsamoney' a few times before returning to your seat, just in time for a cheerfully administered coshing.

WASTED ON THE WEST

But of course, portable DVD players were never intended to be used on creaky British trains. Hell no. Think Nippon, instead, reader-san. Used in their intended context, on the interminably long, daily bullet-train commutes from the suburbs to Tokyo, a portable screen-equipped DVD player makes absolute sense.

"How can watching a screen that's jiggling about like a lap dancer possibly be fun?"

For starters, it's unlikely that your fellow passengers will even acknowledge your presence. The Japanese invented the concept of personal space, so threatening someone else's by staring in wide-eyed amazement simply isn't on, no matter what they've got in their hands.

In any case, when you do pull out your portable DVD player you'll probably find that you're not alone. The magic-carpet-ride quality of most Japanese trains means you don't need a sick bag nearby to watch a DVD movie, so it's a popular way of passing the hours as you head into town.

The well-known Japanese fascination with all consumer electronics also means that if anybody does cast a quick glance at you, it'll only be to clock your player's make and model, prior to their next shopping trip to Akihabara. Courteous respect and admiration, rather than uncontrollable jealousy, is the instinctive reaction to somebody else's good fortune in the land of the rising sun.

While the above explains the logic behind portable LCD-equipped DVD players, one mystery remains unanswered – why on earth would you buy a screenless portable DVD player? Any printable suggestions to the usual address please ❐

The views expressed in this column are not necessarily held by the *What Video & TV* team

SCURRILOUS SCART STORY

At the recent UK launch of Sony's new high-end projection TV, I asked a spokesman why it was only fitted with one RGB-capable Scart. As RGB video is now available from both digital TV STBs and DVD players, providing a couple of RGB-capable Scarts would surely be a sensible move.

'The TV has been designed for the global market and fitting a pair of RGB-capable Scarts isn't seen as a priority,' came the reply. 'It would also be quite expensive. We'll monitor the demand for such a capability, but we don't think many buyers want it.'

Hmm. If I was a UK buyer stumping up £5,000 for a telly, I'd be rather miffed to discover my needs took second priority to saving a couple of quid on the Scarts.

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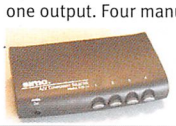

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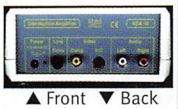

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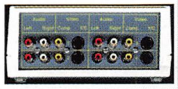

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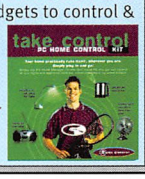

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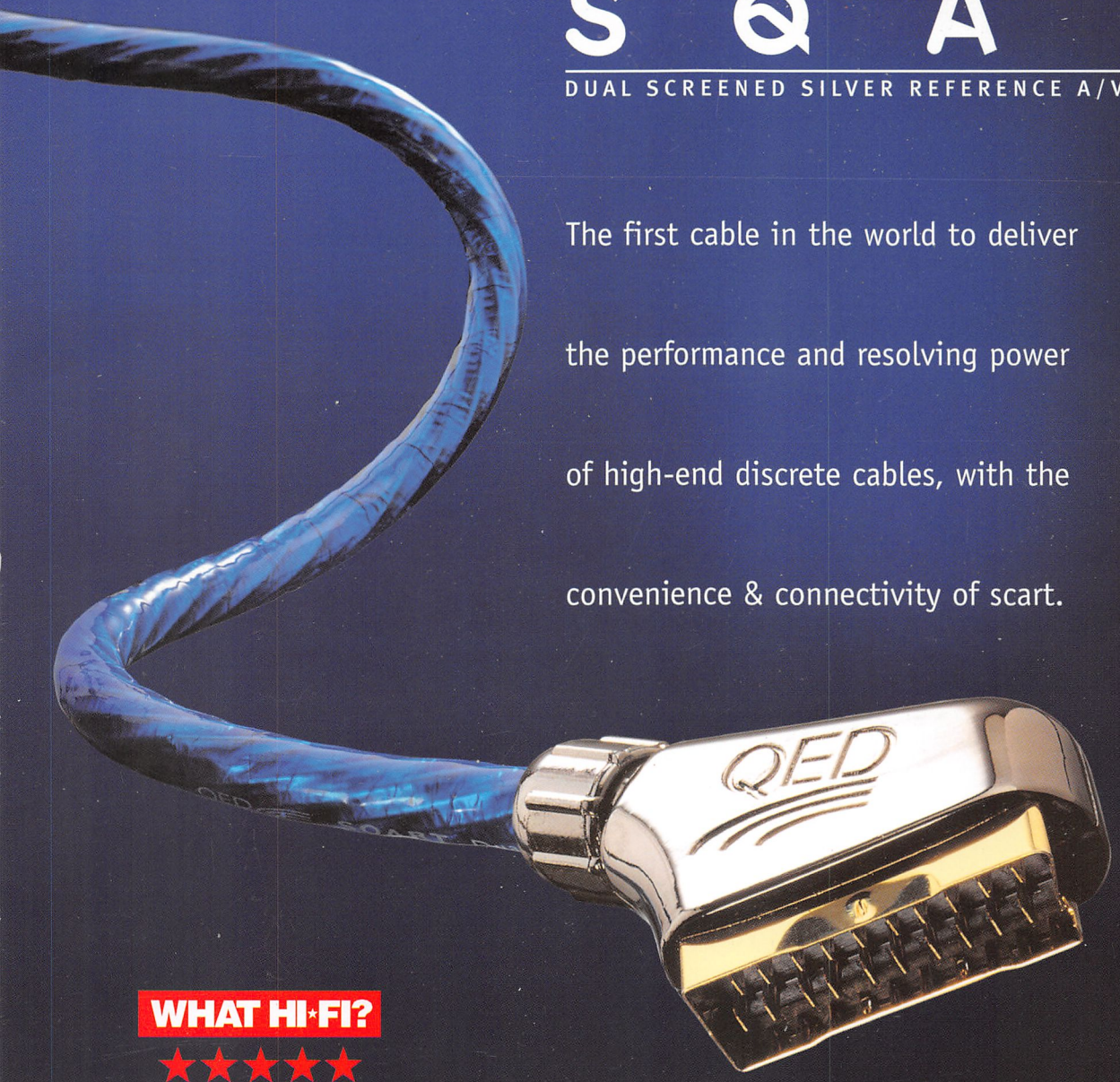

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